

# Aftermath of the Ocarina of Time

by Raven Ebony

Category: Legend of Zelda

Genre: Adventure

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2000-05-06 09:00:00

Updated: 2000-05-06 09:00:00

Packaged: 2016-04-27 17:14:19

Rating: T

Chapters: 1

Words: 32,434

Publisher: [www.fanfiction.net](http://www.fanfiction.net)

Summary: (Z5) After 7 years of exile, Link returns home to find a new menace that threatens not only his life, but his very existence.

## Aftermath of the Ocarina of Time

> <meta name="ProgId"> Link and the Aftermath

Link and the Aftermath

\*\* Of the Ocarina of Time\*\*

\*\*

\*\*(AKA Link RPG)\*\*

\*\*

# By: Matthew Handy

\*\* \*\*

\*\*

\*\*\_ \_"Home, where you are supposed to be, the way you are supposed to beâ€|Thank you Linkâ€| Goodbyeâ€|"\_\*\*

\*\*\_ \_

\_ \_

\_

\_ After all was said and done, Link returned home to his own time, and his ten-year-old body. As Link gazed at himself, he suddenly realized what he must do. No one had seen him for the seven long

years that he had traversed in mere seconds. He knew that it meant that he had to leave Hyrule, to preserve his future. He felt the need to mature as an adult, but also knew he could not do so in Hyrule. After all, Ganondorf still ruled in this time and would be looking for the Triforce of Courage, so Link knew he would be on the Evil King's hit list.\_

—

Navi, however, said that she would remain in Hyrule to make sure that all went as it should, and that she would meet up with Link after he returned. With that, she fluttered out a window leading out of the Temple of Time.

Link left through Gerudo Valley and explored the world " to learn more about himself and the Triforce he that held. Link knew that during those seven years, Hyrule was experiencing a Dark Age, but he also knew that he could not return and change what to him was already history.

After the seven years, Link returned with high hopes of rebuilding Hyrule to the glory that it achieved before Ganondorf's tyrannical rule. Now that Ganondorf was sealed away in the Temple of Light, Link did just that for a time. He and many others began to erect the frame for a new castle. But one day Link laid his eyes on a white wizard that he had never seen before.

He was middle aged from the looks of him, and had short gray hair. His light gray tunic sharply contrasted his flowing red cape. Although the man was taller than Link, he was also gaunter. The wizard introduced himself as Agahnim the Mage. Agahnim spoke somewhat distantly, but seemed kind and eager to help. With his magic, Agahnim moved supplies that ten men could not.

One day, after a long day of masonry work, Link mounted his faithful steed Epona and returned to the Koriki Forest. Mido, who had matured greatly over the years, welcomed Link back even when he discovered that Link was not truly a Koriki.

Link led Epona through the tunnel that led to the bridge, which extended over the Lost Woods. Link stopped at the spot where Saria had given him his fairy ocarina, an item he kept in his magical item pouch to this day, even after he had gained the Ocarina of Time. He took it out and remembered that day.

She had looked so sad that morning. She knew that he was leaving the forest—maybe forever. She had closed her eyes and extended her hands. In them was a tiny ocarina. When he accepted her present, she leaned forward so close to him that he had thought she was going to kiss him. She might have, but he stepped back and ran away. Link had always wondered what would have happened if he had—if they could have been more than friends—but now, Saria was the Sage of Forest, she would always be his friend. Even if he never would see her again—

"There are a lot of memories here," said a voice.

It broke Link's train of thoughts and he gasped in surprise. He looked up to see Saria standing not three feet away from him.

"Saria?" Link knelt down on one knee and hugged her small frame.  
"It's so good to see you again!"

Saria's green tinted hair shimmered in the sunset, as did a tear that Link saw in her eye. "I've missed you so," said the little Koriki girl, "We had so little time to speak the last time we saw each other. Time was of the essence," she noticed the ocarina, "You've kept it all of this time. You have no idea how much that means to me."

"I think I'm beginning to Saria," said Link, he picked her up and twirled around. Saria laughed and held on tight, "I've thought about this moment for seven long yearsâ€|"

Saria reacted to this in a way Link didn't expect. Her eyes became sad and her nose wrinkled as if she were looking in a pet shop window at a puppy she could not have. "I wish it could be Link," she said as Link returned her to the ground, "but I did not come here strictly for pleasure. There are important tasks that only you can accomplish. I have come to warn youâ€|there are dark times ahead and your fate is unclear."

"What do you mean?" asked Link, puzzled.

"Go Linkâ€|I'm sorry but I can tell you no more at the momentâ€|"

Link was about to leave, but he noticed that Saria was leaning forward similarly to the way she had so long ago. This time, he didn't run away. Their lips touched briefly, then parted.

Saria smiled weakly.

Link was about to go with Epona into the Koriki Forest when Saria said something odd.

"May the way of the Hero lead to the Triforce," she said.

Link turned around to ask Saria what that meant but suddenly he realized he was alone, and Saria's innocent laughter echoed throughout the forest.

Link had just put Epona in her stable when he heard the sound of distant hoof beats. He motioned for Navi to check it out. She fluttered through the treetops.

A moment later she called, "Hey! Link, hey! Guess who's coming."

"Who?" asked Link with genuine interest.

Navi popped back below the forest canopy, "It's the Princess!"

"Really?" questioned Link, remembering what Saria had said, "I wonder what she could want."

"Princess Zelda?" asked a Koriki girl, "I've missed her. She's nice."

"Yes she is," said Link, who then blushed.

In response to Link's statement, Navi glowed bright pink. Link raised an eyebrow at this, wondering what was going through her mind.

Just then, Zelda exited the tunnel into the forest. Link ran up to her.

"Zelda," he asked, "is something wrong?"

Zelda gave him an odd look, "What would give you that idea?" she asked, "I just wanted to get away from Kakariko Village for a while."

"Just a feeling," replied Link.

Then, Zelda looked behind Link. Link turned around to see a blond Koriki girl waving. "Hi Princess Zelda," called Fado from her favorite perch on the bridgework, "It is good to see you again."

Zelda waved back and smiled. She dismounted her steed. Then, turning to Link she said, "I just wanted to get away from the hustle and bustle. Everyone is so busy and I'm just getting in the way."

Zelda, Link noticed, was wearing something much different than she normally wore. Instead of her Royal dress, which she wore more often than not, she was wearing a black shirt with a pink vest. She wore not a dress at all, but a pair of tan leather pants. Her gold hair band was replaced by a black ivory one. Though she still was wearing her white gloves. She looked pretty sexy.

"Um," began Zelda, "can I stay here tonight? It's just that it is almost dark and it would take more than an hour to get back to town."

Link considered this for a moment, "Sure," Link replied, "Saria's house is still empty," he motioned in its general direction, "you can sleep there if you'd like."

"Well," actually, stumbled Zelda, "Can I stay with you tonight? I've been a little uneasy about being alone since I lost Impa as my attendant."

Link's heart began to beat faster, "Oh, ok," he said quickly, "If that makes you feel more comfortable," he trailed off, "You know that I'm here for you."

Zelda's horse suddenly neighed loudly. Zelda and Link were at first unsure as to why he had done this, but then Epona loudly answered from within the stable.

Zelda smiled, "Starlight seems to like Epona," she said, "I'll have to put him in with her."

Link smiled too, "There's always room for two," he said, "Hey, I've got an idea."

"What?" asked Zelda, not sure if she was going to like it.

"Do you want to see the most beautiful view in the forest?"

Zelda nodded.

Link asked Fado to take Zelda's horse to the stable, then removed his Longshot from his item pouch, "Hold on tight!" said Link, and extended his right arm. Zelda wrapped her arms around Link's neck and chest, and Link held Zelda by the waist. Aiming the Longshot strait up, Link extended the grappling chain. It took hold of something, just what Zelda was not sure of, and they began to slowly rise up to the forest canopy.

When the Longshot's chain had completely retracted, Zelda looked to see a small deck attached to one of the treetops. Link swung, releasing the Longshot's grappling hook, and both he and Zelda landed on the platform. There really wasn't much there. There was a triangle shaped block of wood on the back of it, probably there for a late night stargazer to rest his head.

Being up so high, Zelda couldn't help but get a little dizzy. She began to topple, but Link caught her, as she knew he would. It was then that she truly noticed the night sky, and what she saw took her breath away. There were billions of stars, more stars than she had ever seen at once before.

"The stars!" she said in awe, "There are so many!"

"It's the forest magic," explained Link, "It allows you to see stars no matter how far away they are."

"It's so beautiful," gasped Zelda.

Link smiled, "I thought you'd like it."

They both lay down and watched the stars. The night air was cool though, and Zelda soon developed a chill.

"I'm cold, Link," Zelda whispered to him. "Please hold me close."

Link took her in his arms.

After about five minutes of silence, Zelda spoke. "When you first returned to Hyrule, I was surprised to see how much you had missed me. I had seen you just days before, and didn't realize at first that seven years had passed since you had last seen me."

"I was wondering if you realized that," commented Link.

Zelda nodded, "Do you remember any of the songs that I taught you as Sheik?"

"Yes," replied Link, "A few, but it was a while."

"Please," requested the Hylian princess, "play one for me."

Link consented to this and removed the ocarina from his pouch. Slowly, Link played the Bolero of Fire. As he played he was careful to accentuate each note to make each of them clear and

pleasant.

"The song of passionate friendship," said Zelda when he had finished.

"The Bolero of Fire," added Link, " It was always my favorite."

Changing the subject Link said, "You know what I've wondered for a long time?"

"What is it Link?"

"The Triforce of Wisdom turned you into Sheik, and the Triforce of Power changed Ganondorf into Ganon, but the Triforce of Courage has never shown any signs of being able to alter its bearer's form that I have seen."

Maybe it is meant to change one's heart, not form," suggested Zelda.

"Perhaps," said Link distantly.

Zelda felt a pressure on her soul to tell Link what was on her mind. "Ever since we first met seven years ago," she began, "I have always had a great respect for you. But when you looked into my eyes the way you did, before I sent you back to your original time, I feltâ€¦"

Link caressed the side of Zelda's face. His hands were warm, even in the chill of the night. "I understand Zelda," he assured, "I have felt the same for a long time." Zelda smiled, and Link could have sworn that there were tears in her eyes. Link continued, "Ever since Saria awoke as a sage, I've lost my best friend, you have no idea just how much your support has meant to me."

Zelda smiled, "You know that I'm here for you," she said. "I thought you had rescued me on that day, but now it seems that you captured my heart in the process," she was silent for a while. Then, after about two or three minutes, she asked, "Would you please play me another song?"

"Sure," said Link

Zelda snuggled closer to Link, resting her head on his chest. Link could feel the warmth of her soft body.

Because his one hand was now pinned under Zelda, Link played the ocarina with one hand. He played the simplest song he knew, the Song of the Royal Family. He played it softly, several times through, then stopped.

Link wanted to tell Zelda about what Saria had said, "Zel?" whispered Link.

She didn't respond. Link moved his head to see that her eyes were closed, she was asleep.

He didn't want to disturb Zelda's angel-like slumber, so he just lay there.

Within minutes, he was asleep, with Zelda in his arms.

That night, Link dreamt a horrible nightmare. In it, Ganon escaped from his imprisonment in the Sacred Realm, and traveled back in time to change history - to kill his mother before the Deku Tree could save her and his younger self.

Link awoke with a start. Zelda awoke too at the scream he let out.

"Are you alright Link?" she asked, startled.

"We have to go now!" called Link, "I'll explain on the way!"

Removing the Longshot from his item pouch, he lowered them back to the ground.

"We'll take Epona; she's the fastest thing on four legs," said Link.

"Where exactly are we going?" questioned Zelda."

"The Temple of Time."

Epona ran full gallop all the way to Hyrule Castle Town. She seemed to sense the urgency of the situation, and Link was glad of that. A few inches behind him, Zelda held tightly around Link's waist.

"Do you really think it's possible?" questioned Zelda as Link helped her dismount.

"We'll find out soon enough," Link replied.

As they entered the Temple of Time, they noticed that, although the gems that allowed entry to the Master Sword's chamber were still safely in the hands of the races that owned them, the Door of Time had been opened.

When they entered the next chamber, Link quickly saw Ruto, Sage of Water, lying unconscious on the ground and that the Master Sword was gone.

With little difficulty, Link and Zelda carried Ruto into a nearby house. Her naked, scale-covered body was badly burned and bruised.

Removing a bottle from his pouch, Link popped the cork and poured its contents, the Medicine of Life, onto the Zora's wounds. Slowly, she began to heal, and after a moment only a few small scars marked the places where she had been injured.

When the last of the potion had absorbed into her skin, Ruto jerked into a sitting position and screamed, "No! You can't!"

It must have been then that she realized where she was. Ruto stared blankly at Link and Zelda for a moment. Then, she gasped, "Oh no! He got it!" Ruto's fins quivered with the realization.

"Who got what?" asked the owner of the house.

"Agahnim," gasped the Zora Princess, "I sensed a disturbance at the Temple of Time, but when I went to check it out, that evil wizard overpowered me," she grabbed Link by the shoulders, "Agahnim has the Master Sword!"

Link took the news better than Zelda. She put her hands over her mouth and gasped.

"How is that possible?" asked Link, "I thought that only I could pull the Master Sword from the Pedestal of Time."

"I don't know Link," said Ruto, "But I sensed a powerful force guiding the wizard's actions and augmenting his power. I don't know how he took the Sword of Evil's Bane, but he did, and used it to enter the Time Stream."

"Did he travel forward in time?" asked Zelda.

"No," said Ruto, "he went backward. I could feel it, but I'm not sure how far," her fins twitched in agitation.

"Then we can't stop him," said Link, "We have no way to follow him."

"Maybe not," commented Zelda. She seemed to be deep in thought, "I'll leave you two to talk for a moment. Link, meet me outside soon."

Link nodded and Zelda got up and left.

Link and Ruto turned to face each other.

Ruto smiled, "Thank you for coming for me," she said, "but I guess that I should expect no less from the man I chose as a potential husband," Ruto stood; she looked at him in a seductive way.

Link was about to tell her how he felt about Zelda, but Ruto continued, "I know it's too late for that now. I have too many responsibilities now and could never be there for you," then she added, "Our children would have been beautiful though."

Link smiled at that.

Ruto returned the smile, "Farewell Link," she said, then vanished, returning to the Temple of Light.

When Link left the house he found Zelda waiting for him. She looked hopeful.

"Link," she said, "It's a long shot, but there may be another way."

"Really?" asked Link, "How?"

Zelda continued, "There is another sword of Legend that is associated with the power of time. It is called the Duotane Blade. Impa told me of it in a bedtime story on several occasions. She said that it was once used to help win the Hylian War almost twenty years ago. It is



known as a blade of paradox, and no one truly knows when it was forged.

"The Duotane Blade rests in an underground labyrinth under Hyrule Field. This Underground Temple was sealed long ago."

"How do I get in then?" asked Link.

"The dungeon was lock with three keys which contain the three Elemental Magics."

"Elemental Magics?"

"Oh," Zelda realized that Link was not familiar with the term, "They are the powers of fire, ice, and life. Each is infused into one key. When the Underground Temple was locked up, the Elemental Keys were stored in the Temples of Fire, Ice, and the Temple of Life. To open the labyrinth, we must collect the keys. Once inside, we must navigate the Maze of Lost Souls until we reach the center. That is where we will find the Duotane Blade."

"Wait," said Link, "What's all this 'we' business?"

Zelda smiled and caressed Link's face, "Of course I'm coming," she said coyly, "My magic will prove useful I am sure."

Link just cocked an eyebrow.

It was still dark out when Link and Zelda returned to the Forest to retrieve Starlight from her stable, but by the time they reached Death Mountain it was dawn. Death Mountain was pretty much the way Link remembered it. The large boulders that had once rolled down the mountainside had now stopped, and the ash clouds that formed a ring around the mouth of the volcano were perfectly white, indicating a good day for traveling.

"The Temple of Fire should be close now," said Zelda from atop her steed, "I don't suppose you still remember the way around it?"

"Better," replied Link, pulling out a parchment, "I kept all the old dungeon maps. We should be good for this temple, although no such luck with the other temples." Link thought for a moment and realized a problem, "Hold on Zelda," he said, "Before we go to the Temple of Fire we should take a pit stop Goron City."

"What for?" questioned Zelda.

"The temperatures inside of Death Mountain are much too great for us to tolerate. We'll need to get some protective clothing and the Gorons make the best."

Suddenly Epona reared up and nayed loudly. Link looked to see what had disturbed her so badly, and that is when he noticed the pack of Tektites advancing on them. "Stay back Princess," he called as her dismounted to face-off with them.

Drawing the Biggoron sword, he began slashing at the spidery things. One of them tried to jump him from above, but Link acted quickly and sliced it in two. Soon, the last one crumpled onto the

ground.

Replacing the sword, Link turned to Zelda saying, "Pretty good, huh?"

Link was surprised to see Zelda was holding a crossbow—in fact, she was aiming it toward him! He turned away. Link heard the trigger pulled, and heard it find its target—but Link felt no pain. Opening his eyes, Link looked up to see a skulltula dangling on a thread of silk an inch above his head. There was an arrow sticking through its skull-like body. It dangled for a moment, and then fell lifeless to the ground.

Link saw too stunned to speak. Zelda just smiled.

When they reached Goron City, Link led Zelda down the twisted rock corridors. "Watch out," cautioned Link, "There may be a few Goron rolling around down here."

Link was right too. Just before Zelda could exit a stairwell, Link raised his arm to a horizontal position in front of her, indicating for her to stop. Not a heartbeat later, a tiny 'boulder' rolled by.

Zelda knew that it was a Goron, a young one judging from its size. He had markings on him that few Gorons that Zelda had seen have.

"Hey, Link!" called Link.

This at first puzzled Zelda, but to her surprise, the Goron stopped and began rolling back to them. When he was in front of them, the Goron unrolled and stood.

"Link!" called the Goron, "it's good to see you again."

Link knelt down in front of the little guy. Then looking to Zelda, he said, "Zelda, this is Link, son of Darunia and future leader of the Goron. Link was named in my honor."

"It's a pleasure to meet you—in Link," said Zelda.

Link (the Hylian) said, "We have a favor to ask of you Link."

"Anything for you Brother," replied the Goron.

Link continued, "We need some Goron clothing so we can enter Death Mountain."

"Of course," responded the Goron Link, "The shops are open. I'll make sure they give you a fair price."

The Goron had been right. The shop owner only charged one hundred rupees per tunic. That was not only fair, but also down right cheap. Link removed the Koriki Tunic that he normally wore and replaced it with the new red tunic. After removing her pink vest, Zelda slipped her Goron Tunic on over her head.

"It's a bit stiff, but a nice fit," commented Zelda.

"It's supposed to be heat resistant, not comfortable," Link replied.

"I know," said Zelda, "Now let's hurry. Who knows what Agahnim is doing to the timeline?"

Link nodded in agreement and they were off.

When they left the shop, the Goron Link suggested that Link and Zelda take the secret passage in Darunia's chamber, "If you are going to the Temple of Fire, that is the fastest way."

Link smiled, "Thanks, Link," he said.

With that, they were off.

When Link pushed the statue out of the way, a blast of hot air rushed to meet them. As they walked into the Volcano itself, Link thought to himself how dangerous it was to bring Zelda along. He could kick himself for putting her at risk like he was. If only she wasn't so headstrong, maybe he could have convinced her not to put her life at risk.

As they crossed a bridge, Zelda, who was in front of Link stopped. She turned around.

Smiling, Zelda asked, "Do you remember what happened here?"

Link smiled back. He felt a new softness in his heart as the memories flowed back into his mind, "I remember," he said, "This is where you taught me the Bolero of Fire."

Zelda smiled and walked back up to him. Soon, she was barely a foot away from him.

Their lips were about to touch when Link saw a ball of fire coming up behind Zelda.

"Duck!" he called, trying not to yell in her face.

Zelda complied.

Removing his boomerang from his item pouch, Link flung it at the flapping ball of flame.

Zelda turned to look just as the boomerang struck its target. The flame instantly extinguished revealing the Keese underneath. It fluttered its wings a few times, trying to stay in the air, but then fell lifelessly into the lava bellow.

Zelda stood again, looking at Link, "You saved me," she gasped.

Link shrugged, "'Tis what I do," he said and smiled. Then, becoming serious again, he said, "Come on. We'd better hurry. Keese never fly alone."

Inside the temple, Link and Zelda maneuvered throughout the passageways. After slashing a few crystal switches, and extinguishing many torch slugs, Link and Zelda reached a door that Link had missed on his previous adventure. It was large, and kind of blended into the

wall around it. The door itself appeared to be made out of stone, and Link knew that he could never muster the strength to force it open.

Zelda turned to Link and said, "Volvagia was not the only fire demon to be sealed up in the Temple of Fire. There was another. A demon named Molotov stole the Elemental Key of Fire. In a desperate act, the knights of Hyrule sealed the lava monster in a chamber a short distance behind this door. They left behind the item they used to seal it, the Ice Rod. Perhaps if we combine that with our other weapons, we can defeat Molotov for good. The Ice Rod should be in a chest behind this door."

Link nodded, "But how do we open the door?"

Zelda smiled, "You just need the right key," she said pointing to his bomb bag.

Link got the idea. Zelda stood back as Link removed a bomb from his bag, set it down, and lit the fuse. After Link stepped back, the bomb exploded and blew out the door.

They stepped inside.

Inside the door was a large chest. Link opened it and to his relief, the Ice Rod was inside. It was a gold magic wand with a blue orb at the top.

He handed it to Zelda, "Keep it," he said, "I'll use my ice arrows."

When they reached the end of the short hall, they came across a door sealed with a Skeleton lock.

"Uh-oh," said Link, "We'll need a Big Key for this door and I don't have it."

"That could be a problem," agreed Zelda.

Link thought for a moment. Then he removed an ice arrow from his quiver, and after handling it for a moment, he jammed it into the lock. It instantly froze solid. With one swift kick, the lock and chain shattered.

"Right kind of key," Link repeated.

Zelda laughed.

The door opened easily after that. As they entered the chamber beyond, they noticed that there was very little to stand on. Most of the chamber was full of lava. There was one platform. Link stepped on it and it seemed sturdy enough so Zelda followed. Suddenly the room began to shake. As Link and Zelda struggled to keep their balances, a large stone block fell from the ceiling over the entrance to the chamber.

Link gritted his teeth as he realized that they were now trapped in there. Then, slowly, a large swell of lava began to rise from the pool. Link was overcome by the sheer bulk of it, as was the Princess who just gapped at it. Arms and hands began to protrude from the

sides of it. A horribly large mouth oozed open as if made of molasses. Then, two black orb-like eyes opened and focussed on them.

"Who disturbs my slumber?" demanded Molotov.

"It is I Link. The Hero of Time," stated Link, "And the Princess of Hyrule, Zelda."

Molotov laughed, "Is that supposed to impress me little man? Why have you come here?"

Link stepped boldly forward, "We have come to make a request of you."

"A request of me?" Molotov seemed amused by this, "What?"

"We need to borrow the Elemental Key ofâ€¦"

Link was interrupted, as Molotov screamed, "NEVER!" Its eyes glowed blood red, "You shall not have my power!"

Zelda tried desperately to explain, "We'll bring it back."

"No!"

"I'm afraid we can't leave without it," said Link.

"Fine with me," stated Molotov, "Because I'm afraid I can't let you leave."

With that, Molotov breathed in and began to blow out a stream of lava at the two. Link sidestepped in front of Zelda and with his shield, he deflected the flow before it could scald either of them. Enraged, Molotov began launching lava bombs at Link.

While barely avoiding the molten rocks, Link launched several ice arrows into the creature's side. To his dismay, the spots he froze stayed that way for only a little over a second.

Meanwhile, Zelda tried out the ice rod with little success. The spots she froze with its ice beam stayed frozen only for a few seconds.

Suddenly, Navi glowed bright green, "Link! I have an idea!" she squealed, "If you put a firecracker on your hand and let it explode it will sting your hand, but if you close your fingers around that same fire cracker, when it explodes it will take your hand off."

"I understand," said Link, grasping the concept, "but Molotov is liquid rock. A bomb would fall right through him."

"You have the means," said Navi.

Taking his guardian fairy's advice, Link launched an ice arrow into each of Molotov's eyes. The demon screamed and clutched his face in pain. In the process, its huge mouth opened wide.

"Quick Zelda, hit it around the mouth!" directed Link.

As she did so, Link pulled a bomb from his pouch and threw it. The bomb entered Molotov's mouth just as it cooled into solid rock. Then Link sealed the creature's mouth shut with an ice arrow.

Molotov clenched its fists and let out a scream full of rage. A second later, the bomb detonated, blowing the demon into a million pieces.

Without Molotov's powerful magic to keep it hot, the pool of lava quickly cooled and solidified. An exit portal formed where the demon was destroyed—and within it, Link spied a key, suspended and spinning. It looked a lot like a Boss Key, but the gemstone inside its handle was a much brighter red.

Link and Zelda moved closer.

"The Elemental Key of Fire!" exclaimed Zelda, "I'll carry it Link; So you don't have to worry about it."

Link nodded, but when Zelda reached for it, he quickly stopped her, "It may still be hot," he cited.

"Oh! You're right Link, thank you," taking out ice rod, Zelda hit the key with ice until it stopped steaming. Then, she grabbed it.

Suddenly, the key started to glow. Soon the glow spread to Zelda. After a moment, the glow ebbed.

"Zelda, are you alright?"

"I'm fine," assured Zelda, "In fact, I'm better. The Elemental Key and the Triforce of Wisdom reacted to each other. It seems that the key has donated its power to me. I just gained a new magic ability," Zelda looked from Link to the portal, "Come, we must hurry."

They stepped into the light, and were transported away.

It was evening before Link and Zelda reached the bottom of Death Mountain. Both Link and Zelda were totally exhausted, and after the heat of the day, their horses weren't in such great shape either.

So, when they reached Kakariko Village, Zelda suggested that they stay the night. Link agreed to this, so they stopped at an inn and found a stable to take care of Epona and Starlight.

When they had settled in, Link made sure the door was bolted tight. Then he lit the kindling in the fireplace. With yet another task accomplished, he turned to Zelda. He quickly turned away again and blushed, realizing she was getting changed. Although she was still basically clothed, she was putting on her nightgown and Link felt she deserved her privacy.

Soon though, she was done and she hung the clothes she had been wearing over a chair. Link turned to her. The nightgown Zelda was wearing made her look even more beautiful than the clothes she was wearing earlier did. It was red, silky and smooth. It extended to the floor and hung on her shoulders.

"I hope you don't mind me saying this, but you look absolutely gorgeous," said Link.

"Thank you Link," Zelda smiled, "I appreciate that."

Link decided to sleep in his cotton shirt and pants, so he undid his belt and removed his tunic.

He had noticed earlier that there was only one bed so he asked, "What about sleeping arrangements? I could sleep on the floor if you'd like."

"If you would likeâ€|" was all that Zelda said.

Navi, Link had noticed, had landed on a hair brush was already asleep.

Zelda removed the ivory hair band from her long blond hair. She stretched her arms out.

So, Link got the pillow, and Zelda got the bed.

They both laid there for a time, but Link heard Zelda moving and knew she was awake.

Link," she asked.

"Hmm?"

Then she asked a question that he hadn't expected. "Those seven years while you were away, while you journeyed through the lands around Hyrule, did you ever fall in love with anyone?"

Link thought about this for a moment. There had been many people that he had met and been close to. There was though a time that stood out in his mind. He wasn't sure if he should tell her, but he did anyway. "Wellâ€|once. About a year ago I was traveling back towards Hyrule by ship. I had been out at sea for several months when a sudden storm hit and sunk the boat. I woke up on the island of Koholint in the house of a beautiful girl. It was strange, she had Malon's soothing singing voice, but looked strikingly like you," he shook his head at the memory, "But she was more dream than reality, and when the dreamer woke she vanished."

"I'm sorry," said Zelda, "You must have been close."

"We could have been," he sighed, "She wanted to leave the island and be as free as the seagulls, and I can only pray that she flies with them now." He paused for a moment, "How about you?"

Zelda shook her head, "No. Impa kept me away from most people."

She didn't say any more. Link looked up a few minutes later and saw that she was asleep.

It was a long, dreamless night for Link. At least this night was free of nightmares.

Link slept quite well, but probably would not have woken up for

another half an hour if he had not been breathed upon. He opened his eyes to find a pair of blue eyes staring into his.

Link blinked. He blinked again. It was Zelda. She had been looking over the bed watching him sleep.

When Link opened his eyes, she smiled, "Good morning."

"Good morning, pretty eyes," Link said sleepily

Zelda smiled at this. So did Link.

"Did you dream about Zelda last night?" It was Navi. Link saw her sitting on Zelda's shoulder.

"No Navi," he said, "What time is it anyway?"

"Six in the morning," Zelda replied, "We'd better go soon,"

They got ready quickly. After about ten minutes, Zelda and Link checked out of the inn and went to the stable to get their horses.

When they exited Kakariko Village, Link asked, "So, where is this Temple of Ice?"

"Just east of Zora's Domain," replied Zelda, "I'll lead the way."

The path to Zora's Domain was easy to traverse. New bridges had been placed up, and the monsters had been quite literally flushed out. When Zora's Domain had finally defrosted, the run off caused every river in Hyrule flood.

As the two Hylian team hurried toward its destination, Zelda told Link about their target, "Her name is Frost. Although she used to be Hylian, when she stole the Elemental Key of Ice, she became something more.

"Frost has done a lot of damage to Lon Lon Ranch in the past years, and she has done a lot of property damage too. But most grievously, it is believed that she was hired by Ganondorf and is responsible for the freezing of Zora's Domain. Do not underestimate her."

Link understood and told Zelda so.

They hurried through Zora's Domain, and the few Zoras that had survived the freezing didn't bother them. When Link and Zelda reached the Zora King, Zelda asked him about how to get to the Ice Palace. The King questioned them as to why they would want to go to such a place, but when Link explained the situation, The King gladly obliged and told them where the temple was and how to get to it.

So, not an hour later, Zelda and Link reached the gates of the second temple, the Temple of Ice. The inside of the palace was freezing. Zelda huddled close to Link to share his body heat—at least that was her excuse. Link wasn't really sure anymore, but it was a valid reason.

There were no torches or windows in the palace, but the walls



themselves seemed to glow. Light filtered through the icy walls from outside. Link noticed that there was no water anywhere. No pools or drips, this was truly ice that would not melt.

Every step now brought down a shower of icicles, and icy-breathed monsters seemed to be every everywhere. It was all that they could do to stay alive. Finally, after about an hour of searching, they came across a door. Upon trying to open it, Link discovered that it was frozen shut.

"I'll bust it down," said Link.

"Don't bother," said Zelda, "I'll handle it."

Holding her hand out in front of her, Zelda closed her eyes and suddenly a ball of fire came to life in her hand. She tossed it at the base of the door. Soon, not only did the ice on the door melt, but also the door itself melted as well and was soon a puddle of water on the floor.

When they entered the next chamber, a voice greeted them coldly, "Who dares to break into my Palace of Ice and disturb me?"

Frost was roughly the height of Link. She slender as most Hylians were. However, her skin was blue tinted, and her hair was more or less purple. Most notable though were her icy blue eyes.

"My name is Link, and this is Zelda," began Link, "We have come to ask something of you."

"I know who you are, and I know what you want," said Frost with disgust, "You want my key don't you? I will not let you have it without a fight."

"I kinda figured that," said Link, "Let's get this over with."

"And so we shall." With that, two ice daggers formed in Frost's hands. She threw them (one at Link, the other at Zelda). Zelda ducked, and the dagger barely missed her. Link just held up his shield and the dagger shattered on contact.

Using the Fairy Bow, Link began to launch fire arrows at Frost. They did some damage, but seemed to piss her off more than anything.

Then, in a fit of rage, Frost pointed her finger at Link, and an icy lightning bolt shot out at Link. He couldn't move in time, and it struck him, encasing him in ice.

Link couldn't move; it was so cold. He couldn't even breathe, and soon everything went dark.

When Zelda saw what had happened, she was speechless. Then, a rage overcame her. Aiming her hands at Frost, Zelda emitted fire in a flame-thrower attack.

Frost quickly countered with her ice beam, and the two magical beams met in the middle. At first it seemed as though they were evenly matched, but Zelda, with the Triforce of Wisdom on her side, quickly began to win out. Soon, Zelda overcame Frost and the magical fire

sent her sprawling to the ground unconscious.

Next, the Princess turned her attentions to Link, and within seconds, Link was free.

Unconscious, Link's body crumpled to the ground. Zelda rushed over to Link and did her best to warm him as quickly as possible. Link opened his eyes and breathed deeply.

"Link! My darling Link," gasped Zelda, "are you alright?"

Link nodded, "Yes, thank you," he wheezed, "But get the key before she recovers."

Zelda looked to see the Elemental Key of Ice in Frost's hand—and her fingers were twitching.

Like the Elemental Key of Fire, the Elemental Key of Ice looked like a Boss Key except the gemstone in its eye was blue instead of red. And, like the other, the Elemental Key of Ice gave its power to Zelda.

Suddenly, the Palace began to shake.

"You fools!" yelled Frost, "My magic was holding this Palace together! Now we'll all die when it collapses!"

Despite how weak he was, Link was up like a flash. Ocarina in hand, he scooped up Zelda and Frost. Then, playing the Minuet of Forest, they warped to safety.

What felt like seconds later, the ocarina's magic deposited the three on the carved stone platform, in front of the Forest Temple. Zelda looked below her to see the Symbol of Forest beneath her feet.

The sun was high in the sky.

As Zelda stepped down from the platform, she saw the spirits and sprites that danced around in the trees.

It was then that Link and Zelda turned their attentions back to Frost. She was still standing on the platform, scowling at them.

"What should we do with her?" asked Zelda, never taking her eyes off Frost.

Link was still shivering; he was soaking wet. He sat down and began to tug his wet tunic off. He shook his head, "To kill her now would be in cold blood. I doubt she'll attack us now and she's harmless without her magic. I say just let her go." Link sighed and began to put on a blue tunic.

Zelda was actually surprised that Link would show such lenience toward Frost after what she had done to him.

Frost began to go, but then she turned around, "You're really just letting me go?"

"Yep," said Link in an uninterested manor.

Frost scowled again, "Don't expect me to be grateful!"

"Fine. Don't be thankful," said Link, "Just go." Zelda could tell that Link was becoming annoyed.

"Stupid Hylian brat!" yelled Frost, "You haven't changed at all. You even look the same!"

She ran off.

Frost's statement disturbed Link though. He gave Frost a funny look, but she didn't see and was soon long gone.

Link laid down on the transport platform.

"What was that supposed to mean?" asked Zelda.

"I don't know," said an exasperated Link, "Everything seems to be pointing towards the same thing. I just wish I knew what that was," after a moment he said, "Zelda, do you know what the phrase 'May the way of the Hero lead to the Triforce' means?"

Zelda thought about it for a moment, but nothing came to mind, "I've never heard it before. Why?"

"It's just something that Saria said," said Link. He sounded a little stronger.

"Hey Link! Hey Zelda!" called Navi. She was glowing bright green and was obviously very anxious, "I think I know who that was! The Deku Tree once told me about his first Koriki."

"First Koriki?" asked Link.

"He told me a lot about you too," said Navi, "Frost was the Koriki that was to take care of you until you could walk and talk," Navi's voice became very solemn as she said, "But she lost her mind when her guardian fairy died. Soon afterwards, she left the forest."

"How could she be Koriki?" asked Link, "She looked at least as old as me, but Koriki don't age."

Navi continued, "Frost had the ability to grow old. The Deku Tree thought that that might have been the problem. So, he kept the other Koriki young in hopes that they would not lose their innocents."

It had been a lot for Link to absorb. Link had never thought of himself as a baby. He really couldn't remember back that far in his childhood.

They had been walking through the forest for quite a while now. Zelda had told Link that the Temple of Life was deep within the forest and that there were no paths that led to it. The holder of the Elemental Key of Life was named Angel. Angel was a female gargoyle of who Zelda knew little about. Apparently, many had gone to find out about her, but none had ever returned.

For a long time, the two walked in silence. For several hours, Link felt that Zelda wanted to say something, but she kept

silent.

However, when Link suggested that they rest for a few minutes, Zelda accepted. Soon, the pain she felt began to come out. Zelda had never spoken about her father before, but from what the other peoples of Hyrule had told him, he had been able to piece together part of the storyâ€|the King was dead.

"My father was always a warrior at heart," began Zelda, "Though he was the kindest king that Hyrule had ever known, my father insisted on leading the knights who fought in the Hylian war. Thanks to my father's skillful leadership, our soldiers quickly defeated the Gerudo invaders. Afterwards Ganondorf, who had led the attack, swore allegiance to the King for ten years.

"For a time, peace settled over the land. But on that day seven years ago, Ganondorf attacked with the power of the Triforce. Although my father bravely, but stubbornly fought the King of Thieves, Ganondorf slew him."

Zelda was beginning to cry. Link held his hands to comfort her and she quickly moved to him. They embraced tightly and Link soon Zelda's wet cheek against his neck.

Link felt that he had to do something, so as gently as he could, he said, "Really, you're lucky. Your father was a powerful influence on you. You wouldn't be the woman you are today if you had not had him," he sighed, "I never knew my parents. My mother died rescuing me from the Gerudo. I never got any words of wisdom from her. Nor did I get to show her how I turned out."

Zelda looked into Link's eyes, then she put her forehead against his, "We've both lost familyâ€|and friends," she said somberly, "I know that you've had a hard life too, but I've been totally lost since my father died. If not for Impa, I'd have lost my mindâ€|and now she's gone too.

"Link, I'm only nineteen years old. I'm not ready for the responsibilities that I must take on. I can't do this alone. I know that this isn't the best time for this butâ€|"

Link held her close, then kissed Zelda's forehead, "I'll always be there for you. No matter what."

"Thank you. Link," said Zelda. She smiled weakly.

Navi fluttered around overhead as her friends continued. The little fairy was surprised at how much the Hyrulain Princess had kept inside of her. \_She must have had to grow up real fast. Too fast, Navi decided. Navi's color changed to blue at the thought.\_

—

Tired of flying, Navi landed on Link's blue hat and listened to Link and Zelda's conversation.

"I'mâ€|sorry about back there Link," Zelda said, "I just needed to get some things off my chest."

"I understand, and there is no need to apologize," Link slowed so

that they could look at each other, "You know that I'd do anything for you. I can't stand to see you suffer."

That was another thing that Navi didn't understand. Link and Zelda obviously cared very deeply for one another, yet they had so much trouble showing it. If only the silly Hylians could change color like fairies could. That way no mixed messages would be sent because everyone could see how you felt.

"You surprise me Link," said Zelda, "You fight so well, ferociously, yet methodically. I first noticed this when you fought Ganondorf. You showed no emotion in almost mercenary style. I wasn't even sure you cared. But now, I see a totally different side of you—and I like it."

Link smiled, "Truthfully, I didn't show a lot of emotion because I didn't understand much of what was going on. Remember, at the time I still had the mind of a ten-year-old. But since then, I grew up. I had that chance because of you."

Zelda smiled, "I'm glad."

They finally reached the Temple of Life. By then it was late evening and the sun was almost set. The Temple of Life was huge. Although it looked similar to the Forest Temple, it was not raised above ground to keep people out. Instead, there was a large metal gate blocking the entrance.

Zelda tried her new fire and ice magic against the door to no avail, the palace remained sealed.

"How are we supposed to deal with this?" questioned Link.

"I don't know," said Zelda.

It was then that the sun set. Suddenly, the gate began to rumble and then, as if a drawbridge, it began to lower.

"A temple that can only be entered at night," said Link, "I don't think I like this."

Zelda agreed.

They entered the temple anyway. It was dark inside, but Link lit a torch to illuminate the surroundings. When he saw his surroundings, he wished he had left it dark. There were about three dozen coffins lining the walls and floors of the large room they were in.

In response to the light, the coffins opened and row after row of Redead and Gibdos began to advance on them. Right away, Link drew the Biggoron sword and began swinging wildly at the Redead to keep them away from Zelda. Meanwhile, Zelda began to use her flame-thrower attack on the mummies.

"Watch out! Behind you!" called Navi.

Instead of looking, Link did a spinning sword attack and destroyed a Redead that was behind him as well as one that he had seen in front of him.

"Thanks Navi," said Link.

With the two working together, the last of the undead creatures finally fell.

When the last zombie-like creature hit the ground, a big chest formed in the center of the room. Link had to literally wade through bodies to get to it.

There was an inscription on the chest. Link saw it when he got close, "Powerang," he read aloud, "I wonder what that means."

"Only one way to find out," said Zelda.

Link nodded. Then, with one quick thrust, he pushed open the chest and reached inside. He felt something sharp, so he carefully pulled the treasure out. When he saw what was in his hand, he smiled, liking it immensely.

It was a boomerangâ€¦sort of. It was larger than most boomerangs that Link had seen. It had a large green gem right in the center of it. Its most defining characteristic though was that at every corner there was a large barb coming out.

"Hey Zelda, look at this," called Link. He turned around to show her. That is when he saw it. Zelda was standing there looking at him, not even aware that a Redead was coming up behind her. It was not even three feet behind her.

There was no time to warn her. So, taking his new toy in hand, Link flung the Powerang. When Zelda realized that Link had thrown the Powerang, she ducked and barely escaped being grabbed by the Redead. The Redead however was not so lucky. When the Powerang hit it, it actually ripped the zombie in two at the waist. Both halves of the creature fell de-animated on the ground.

"Link!" called Zelda as the Powerang returned to Link's hand. She looked around to see what had happened, "Ummâ€¦thanks."

"Don't mention it," said Link, "but be sure you keep a look out." He wasn't mad at her of course, but things like that were why he hadn't wanted to bring the Princess along in the first place. He couldn't protect her all the time. It was strange though. Without Zelda, Link was sure that he wouldn't have made it nearly as far. It was just that he was deathly afraid that Zelda might get hurt, or even killed.

They entered the next chamber. There were no coffins or Redead in this room. In fact, it was almost empty. It was enough to unnerve Zelda a little bit.

Zelda was ashamed of her inability to defend herself. Link had probably lost a lot of respect for her abilities because of that. If they were ever to have something together, he had to be able to trust her.

The only things that Zelda saw in the chamber were a well and a barred door. There were no switches in sight, on the floor, walls, or ceiling.

Link walked over to the well and examined the water closely. After a moment he said, "I see something at the bottom of the well. It's a switch."

Zelda examined it as well; "It must be more than twenty feet down. Neither of us could hold our breath long enough to reach it."

Link shook his head, "As luck would have it, I'm wearing a Zora's Tunic. With it, I can breath underwater."

"Oh, ok," said Zelda, "Be careful then."

With that, Link dove in and began to swim to the bottom. It took him several minutes to reach the bottom. Finally, he reached his destination. Link pushed down as hard as he could to get the switch down. When he did, the bars on the door to the next chamber lifted.

Link swam up as quickly as he could. It only took him about twenty seconds. When he surfaced, Zelda helped him to get out.

"Did it work?" he asked.

Zelda nodded. Strangely enough, Link wasn't wet. It must have been the Zora magic inherent in the cloth. "Let's go get Angel."

The door opened easily and Zelda and Link entered the next chamber. This chamber was large and completely empty. There was a window to the left side, but that was it except the stone walls. The two took a few steps into the room when suddenly the door slammed shut and re-barred. Both Link and Zelda spun around to see.

Zelda gasped as she realized that they were now trapped.

A booming laugh echoed over them and a figure darted off of the ceiling where she had been shrouded by shadow. It was Angel. She hung suspended in the air before them.

"You defeated my admirers," she said cruelly, "but I suppose you would make a good start for a new collection of admirers," she laughed again.

"Admirers?" questioned Zelda. Then suddenly it all came together, "Those Redead were the people who came to find out about you!" she said angrily, "You killed them and then used your magic to steal their deaths and make them your undead servants."

"Very good," hissed Angel, "But it will do you no good. I hold the Power of Life and am immortal."

"How would you like to spend the rest of your immortal eternity in six pieces?" challenged Link.

Angel hissed and shot a pulse of energy at Link. Link blocked it with his shield and countered with the Powerang.

The Powerang ripped a hole in Angel's wing and she came crashing down.

"It seems that you're not as invincible as you thought," taunted

Link.

"Not invincible," responded Angel, "just immortal," A ball of green light surrounded the gargoyle for several seconds. When it subsided, Angel's damaged wing was completely healed. She laughed and took flight again.

Link tried attacking with his sword and Zelda with her magic, but Angel would always heal herself and shrug off their attacks. After a while, Zelda realized that they were getting nowhere fast.

Suddenly though, Navi perked up and called out, "Hey you two! Angel is a creature of the night! Gargoyles turn to stone during the day."

"But it is hours until dawn," called Link. He defended himself against an attack.

"Restless demons wander where they don't belong," said Navi, "Bring them calm with Sun's Song."

"Right!" called Link. Then, pulling out his ocarina, he played.

Suddenly it started to rain.

"Sorry, wrong song."

"Hurry up Link!" called Zelda as she threw a set of ice knives at Angel to keep her from trying to land.

Link played again and this time, night turned to day. As light filtered through the window, Angel began to darken and stiffen up.

"What! Impossible!" she was cut off as her mouth petrified.

A moment later, the stone body of Angel fell to the floor, and shattered.

In the rubble, Zelda spotted the green stone in the eye of the Elemental Key of Life. She quickly picked it up and gained its power.

Where she stood, an exit portal formed. Link hurried to her, and they transported away.

The portal released Link and Zelda on Hyrule Field. The two turned to each other.

"We have them all!" said Zelda excitedly. She hugged Link tightly and smiled.

"Now," said Link, "Let's go get the Duotane Blade and stop that madman Agahnim."

Thanks to Sun's Song, the two had skipped through most of the night. So, they decided to forego sleep and continue on. Link had asked Zelda if she wanted to rest, but she declined.



"So where is the entrance to this Underground Temple?" asked Link. He looked around to see the high plateau that was the resting-place of Lon Lon Ranch. It was about a hundred feet away.

"You're looking at it," said Zelda.

"Lon Lon Ranch?" questioned Link.

"The entrance is at the base of the plateau," Zelda responded.

They quickly made their way to the entrance, or so Zelda said, but all Link could see was solid rock. Zelda assured him that it was around there somewhere. So, Link got out the Lens of Truth and began to scan the rock wall. After a moment, he spotted an opening in the rock. They moved to it and Link extended his hand to guide Zelda through the illusionary wall. She took his hand and they slowly moved through it.

Zelda and Link quickly descended a stone stairway until they reached the bottom and came across a large stone door. The door was very solid and showed no signs of being able to be forced open. There were though, three keyholes in the door.

"I guess this is it," said Link as he inspected the door.

Zelda agreed.

"Are we supposed to put them in any particular order?" asked Link.

"I don't know," said Zelda, "How about we put them in the order we got them?"

So they did. In the first keyhole Zelda placed the Elemental Key of Fire, in the second, the Elemental Key of Ice, and in the third keyhole, she placed the Elemental Key of Life.

Then, Link took hold of the first two keys, and Zelda grabbed the third. They turned all three keys at once. A few seconds later, the old door began to rumble, then it raised up and out of sight.

The two entered the next chamber.

"We've made it Link," whispered Zelda excitedly, "The Maze of Lost Souls. We must be careful. The spirits of the dead reside here. Many of those who lost their lives during the Hylain war became trapped in this place."

Zelda felt a touch of fear rise unbidden from within her as they maneuvered through the Underground Temple. Zelda looked around quickly as they entered but saw nothing out of the ordinary in the dim light. The only thing she noticed was the musty smell and the abundance of cobwebs. Apparently the dead, just like some living she could think of, were not fond of dusting. Bones of long dead soldiers still lay scattered about the red stained stone cavern.

Link, who was leading, hit a dead end and they were forced to take another route. They moved on without incident.

Well, it was not entirely without incident. It was true that nothing

disturbed the two as they moved through the darkness, but Zelda could not shake the feeling, which grew stronger as they slipped deeper into the caverns, that something was nearby. She felt something... she could only describe it as some kind of presence, and the feeling soon became overpowering. She kept glancing sharply around, for she kept thinking that she could see something just out of the corner of her eye, but when she looked that way there was nothing there. And there were sounds too. Furtive movements scurried in the darkness around them. Or so it seemed. Yet even when she concentrated solely on listening, she could not really be sure what she was hearing was real.

Link said nothing, but soon she realized that he must have felt it too because he was looking around nervously as well.

As they neared the center of the maze the feeling doubled in intensity.

She stumbled for a moment, almost overwhelmed by it. Ghastly shrieks emanated from ghostly sources. Furtive shadows surrounded her, whirling around her in every direction, everywhere!

\_Get a hold of yourself, she thought angrily. She took a deep breath and forced herself to look only at Link's back. Then she marched deliberately after him, resolutely ignoring the dark movements in the shadows around her. \_

\_

The walls opened up as they entered a chamber. Link came to a sudden halt, and Zelda almost stumbled into him.

That was when they saw it, the Duotane Blade.

The Duotane Blade was embedded in a large slab of concrete, which had the symbol of the Triforce carved into it. The word 'blade' aptly described the Duotane Blade. There was practically nothing else to it. It was a very large, flat bladed, double-edged sword. There was a long skinny handle protruding out of the top of it. The sword looked heavier than the Biggoron sword, but Link had a feeling that it would be surprisingly light.

Stepping up behind the sword, Link called, "Stay back Zelda."

Zelda gave him a puzzled look as if she didn't understand his request, but she did it anyway.

Then, taking the Duotane Blade firmly by the handle, Link pulled upward. The sword slid out easily in Link's hands. He braced himself, waiting to be catapulted into the pastâ€|but he soon realized that nothing was happening.

Link looked to Zelda, "It's a gyp!" he said frustrated, "Nothing happened."

Zelda again looked puzzled, but after a moment, she started to laugh. She put her hand over her mouth.

"What's so funny?" asked Link.

"You mean you thoughtâ€¦!" she said, her eyebrows raised and a big smile on her face, "It doesn't work here. You have to put it in the Pedestal of Time silly."

Link looked blankly at her for a moment, "Oh," he said finally, "You could have told me sooner."

"Well I just assumed that you knew."

"Well you know what they say about assuming."

"No, what?" asked Zelda.

Link blushed realizing that he probably shouldn't have said that, "Never mind."

"Really what?"

"It's rude," said Link.

"Come on, tell me," she was smiling in an anxious way.

"Oh all right," Link decided just to tell her, "They say to assume is to make anâ€¦!"

Suddenly, Link heard the sound of footsteps and he turned around to see a Stalfo, but it was unlike any Stalfo that he had ever seen before. It was at least twice as big. It had a huge sword and a giant shield.

"It's a Skeletal Warrior!" cried out Zelda, "This is what happens when a Stalfo becomes older. It's stronger, but slower."

"Thanks for the tip Zelda," said Link. Then he called, "Navi! Fly close to it! I need a clear target."

The Skeletal Warrior began an offensive charge against Link.

Navi flew close to it and called, "It's an undead creature! Zelda, try your life magic. That which heals us would kill an undead creature!"

Zelda tried, but the Skeletal Warrior simply blocked her magic with its shield.

"No good!" she replied, "I can't get a clear shot!"

The skeleton and Link clashed swords for a while. Then, Link got a clear shot and did a diving strike with his new sword. He caught the creature off guard and sliced it down the middle. The skeleton soon crumbled into a pile of bones.

Link smiled, "I like this sword."

When Zelda and Link exited the temple, they came across Malon, the ranch hand and daughter of the owner of Lon Lon Ranch. She was humming her mother's song as she often did. When she noticed Link and Zelda she stopped.

"Hey you two," she called, "Did you come from that hidden

chamber?"

"You knew about it?" asked Zelda.

"I used go down there sometimes to be alone," said Malon, "I'd just sit up against that door and wonder what was inside."

"The door is open," explained Link, "and there are monsters inside, and there was this," Link held up the Duotane Blade.

"What a nice sword," said Malon, "but it looks much too big for your sheath," she held up her hands, "Wait here!" she said, "I think I have just the thing for you!"

She ran back up the Plateau. A few minutes later she came back. She was holding a harness-like contraption. It was leather, and attached at the belt and around the chest, like Link's sheath. On the back though, there was a metal plate instead of a sheath.

"The metal plate is a magnet," explained Malon, "My father used to use it to carry things, but I'm sure he won't miss it now."

She helped him put it on. It wasn't too uncomfortable and it fit well. Link tried placing the Duotane Blade behind his back and was pleasantly surprised when it attached itself to the magnetic plate. Still, he had to be able draw it quickly. He tested it and it came off easily enough.

"Thanks Malon," said Link, "This is really helpful. Could you please do me another favor?"

"Sure," answered Malon.

"Zelda and I left our horses at the edge of Zora's River. Would you get them for us?"

"Of course," said Malon, "I'll get them this afternoon."

"Thank you," said Zelda, "And now we must hurry to the Temple of Time."

Link and Zelda found the Temple of Time in the same condition they had left it in. The Door of Time was still open and the Pedestal of Time was still bare.

The two began to make their way to the chamber that once held the Master Sword when a voice cried out, "Wait! There is still more I must tell you!"

The two turned to see Saria standing behind them.

"Saria!" said Link, "I was wondering if I'd see you again before this was over."

Saria nodded, "I've sensed a great disturbance in the time stream. Those dark clouds may have passed over the horizon long ago, but to you it is still in the future. It is up to you to decide weather this timeline in which we exist will continue or end before it began. Because you may need my help later, I have composed a song that will allow you to contact me no matter where or when you are."

Saria got out her ocarina and waited for Link to do the same, "Take this song to heart. I call it the Song of Sages." She blew softly into her ocarina. The song had eight main notes but reminded Link distinctly of 'Saria's Song' which she had taught him so long ago. Still, he repeated it to commit it to memory.

"If you have any questions, I can answer them," said Saria, "Just play my song and I will hear you."

Link knelt down, "Thank you my friend," Link said. He reached out and they hugged.

"Goodbye," said Saria, "and I leave you with an old Hylian battle cry: May the way of the Hero lead to the Triforce."

"So that's what that meant," commented Zelda.

Saria nodded, then vanished.

They made their way to the Pedestal of Time.

Zelda seemed very disturbed by what Saria had said. She kept it to herself though.

Link decided that he would not let Zelda put herself in danger anymore. "Zelda, I want you to stay here," he said.

"What?" said Zelda shocked, "but haven't I been helpful?"

"More than that," assured Link, "I couldn't have made it this far without you, but I won't let you risk your life anymore."

"Isn't that for me to decide?"

"Please, just promise me," pleaded Link.

Zelda hesitated for a moment but said, "Alright."

She stepped back and watched Link head up to the Pedestal of Time.

Link removed the Duotane Blade from its magnetic sheath. He held it high above his head, then he thrust it down into the pedestal. A few chips of marble were knocked away as the sword drove in, but the pedestal remained otherwise intact. Link felt energy flowing through him as the temple's magic began to react with the Duotane Blade.

Suddenly Link felt something grab him from behind. He turned to see Zelda clutching him tightly around the chest. She looked right back at him, smiling slightly at his shocked expression. Before Link could react, the Triforce symbol below them lit up and the blue light took them.

When the light subsided, Link noticed that the temple's walls looked considerably newer. They must have traveled back a long way. That didn't matter now though. He looked at Zelda, eyes wide, "Why?" he asked.

Zelda stepped back, "I had to do it," she explained, "Something inside me said 'go to him,'" she shrugged, "so I did."

Link put his hands on Zelda's shoulders, "But Zelda, when the castle is completed, you will be crowned Queen of all Hyrule andâ€¦" Link couldn't keep the sadness out of his eyes when he said, "if anything was to happen to you, I don't know what I'd do."

Zelda looked solemnly at Link and put her forehead against his, "You really do care about me don't you?"

Link gave the affirmative.

"Don't you see though?" said Zelda softly, "That is why I must come with you. I can't let you do this alone because if we fail, either of us might not exist. We have decisions to make, and things to learn that will determine our future."

The way she said that got to Link. It was as if she were talking about something deeper.

"Ok," said Link, "Let's get to work then." He looked to the a the Door of Time and saw that it was closed, "If Agahnim passed through here, he closed the door behind him. How do we get out to find out when we are?"

Zelda removed the Ocarina of Time from her item pouch and handed it to Link, "With this," she said, "and the Song of Time. Though I believe that I already know when we are."

"Really? When?"

They exited the Temple of Time. Zelda had been right of course. Although Hyrule Castle Town was peaceful enough, out in Hyrule Field, they could easily see the endless battle field of the Hylian War.

As they began to head for the gate that would allow them to exit Hyrule Castle Town, Zelda told Link all she could think of about the period. "Look at it Link! History is unfolding before us. In the weeks to come, the Hylian knights will make a final charge, and under the leadership of my father, they will drive back the invading forces."

Zelda looked around to see that the streets were almost empty. There was a war going on after all so it wasn't really all that unusual.

The two traveled until they reached Hyrule Field. Link looked around.

"We had better find out what the situation is. The Hylian knights may have information on the whereabouts of Agahnim." said Link.

That seemed like a good idea to Zelda so she agreed.

They headed for the nearest base camp, a large tented area surrounded by canons and siege towers.

As they reared the camp Zelda heard someone call, "Someone's coming!" They were greeted by a few guards with their swords and shields

ready. Link noticed that their shields were considerably less ornate than his own. The knights' shields lacked the phoenix symbol that was on his. Link did not draw his sword or ready his shield so that they would not perceive him as a threat.

"What is your business here?" called a knight.

"I am Link and this is Zelda. We wish to speak to the man in charge," stated Link.

The knight looked at him suspiciously, but waved for them to follow him. The three moved through a hospital structure where there were rows of wounded being tended to.

Next they walked by a training ground where soldiers were training and honing their skills. They eyed the two strangers, but didn't slow down from their swordplay.

Finally, they came to a small bare tent. The knight entered to announce them and then exited again. "He will see you," the soldier said.

Link entered and Zelda followed.

When she saw who the base's leader was, she gasped. Sitting at a desk in front of her was her father, King Harkinan.

Link could tell that Zelda was shocked, but he contained his surprise. He was sure that most Hylians knew about the King's command post position so he didn't want to seem out of the ordinary any more than he already did.

"Hello sir," Link greeted.

"Ah," began the King, "You must be Link," then he turned to Zelda, "And Zelda. I have a baby girl named Zelda. I hope that she will grow up to be as beautiful as you my lady." He smiled a weak smile.

"Thank you my Lord," said Zelda. She blushed, "That is a great compliment coming from you."

King Harkinan stood and moved closer to Link. "My good Link," he began, "With that sword and shield you are no doubt a mercenary. If that is the case I wish to hire your services."

"Hire me?" asked Link, deciding to let the King think of him as whatever he wished, "What ever for?"

"Truth be told," explained Harkinan, "the war is not going as well as would be hoped. We have lost many good men to the Gerudo forces," he sighed, "Things have become worse lately when a man in a flowing red cape appeared a few days ago. He used his powerful magic to drive our men from three of our bases."

"What?" questioned Zelda. She shook her head in belief, then made a hasty exit from the tent.

"Is she alright?" asked the King.

"I believe so," replied Link, knowing otherwise, "That man, I believe is the one we have been searching for. His name is Agahnim and we have followed him here in hopes if keeping him from doing damage. I fear we may be too late."

"There is always hope young man."

Suddenly Link had an idea. He knew immediately that he probably should not go through with it, but then he got to thinking, \_does a timeline in which Zelda is so unhappy deserve to exist? No, he decided.\_

—

"Sir," said Link, "I am going to tell you something at the risk of causing damage myself."

"Go on," encouraged the King.

"If this war is won by you, peace will settle upon this land for ten years. One day though, a black hearted monster who holds the Triforce of Power will attack Hyrule and win. On that day you must go into exile and wait for—" Link thought for a moment about how long it had been, "seven years nine months and twenty-two days," Link estimated, "Anyway, it will be safe about two or three months after Death Mountain regains it's normal look."

"Are you some sort of fortune teller?" asked the King skeptically.

"More than that," said Link, "I actually experienced it. When I said we followed Agahnim, I meant that we followed him from the future."

Link could tell that the King didn't believe him.

"And just how did you get here from the future?"

"The Temple of Time. Agahnim stole the Master sword and we followed him."

The King considered this for a moment. Link seemed to be reaching him. "Do you have any way of proving your story's truth?"

Link thought for a moment. Then he remembered one thing that might be able to convince the King, "There is this," he said. Link extended his left hand and concentrated. Suddenly a blue triangle appeared on the back of his hand.

Harkinian stepped back, "By Din's flaming arms!" he gasped. Then a moment later he whispered, "That girl out there. She is my darling Zelda isn't it?"

Link nodded, "Don't tell her I told you though."

Suddenly the King snapped back to his original poise, "Even if your story is true," he said, "I would fight to my dying breath before I let Hyrule fall."

"You don't understand," said Link, "If you do not leave on that day,



your dying breath will come and go."

"I would never abandon Hyrule!" said the King stubbornly.

"Even if it means that your daughter would never see you alive again?"

Harkinian didn't answer.

When Link exited the tent, he spotted Zelda sitting under a nearby tree and went to her. He could tell that she had been crying, but she seemed better now.

"The King wants us to help him," Link said.

Just then the King exited his tent and hurried to explain to his men about Link's plan. Link's plan was for the Hyrulain army to mobilize and attack the Gerudo the next day. This would buy Link and Zelda enough time to reach the three bases and rid them of the monstrous infestation. In Death Mountain, a rock monster had invaded a lookout tower. At the edge Gerudo Valley, an evil spirit had taken over a crucial base. Finally, at the edge of the forest, three monstrous serpents had chased off and killed many.

Zelda looked up at Link, "You didn't tell my father anything that you shouldn't have, did you?"

Link shook his head, "I did not tell him anything that I didn't need to. He knows that Agahnim is a threat, but not much else."

"Alright," she replied, "This is all wrong. I never heard mention of the loss of even one Hylian base."

Link sat next to her and put his arm around her. She put her head on his shoulder and they sat in silence for several minutes.

Then, a knight walked up and addressed them, "So we're supposed to take orders from you now are we? Some rouge out of nowhere."

Link looked up and did his best not to look agitated, "You may not trust me, but I know at least as much about Agahnim as you do. The King has put a certain amount of faith in me, so I suggest that you do the same."

The soldier eyed him up for a moment. Then said, "Trust in character ain't what it's about. How am I supposed to trust your skills if I don't know you?"

"I don't know," replied Link, "How?"

"A contest, that's how," said the soldier with a cocky tone, "You ever play homerun before?"

Link shook his head so the man explained the rules. Basically, one person was the designated pitcher and would throw the ball for the competing players. The players would each have a wooden bat, and when the pitcher threw the ball, the players would have to hit the ball as far as he could. The batter would have three chances to hit the ball and the one who hit the ball farthest would win.

"Ok," agreed Link, he got up, "let's get to it then."

"Not so fast," said the knight, "To make it more fun, each of us must put an item up as collateral. The winner gets both weapons."

Link didn't like the idea but agreed anyway.

"What're you gonna put up?" asked the knight, "Maybe that pretty shield of yours or that sword."

Link clutched the handle of the Duotane Blade and said, "The sword is important. The shield will be fine." He removed his Hylian shield from its hook, "What about you?"

"A item from my equipment should be fine," said the knight, "I put my Hookshot up for grabs."

"I've already got a Longshot," said Link, "and it extends twice as far as any Hookshot." Link removed the Longshot from his item pouch and showed it to him. The knight frowned at it.

"Ok!" said the knight frustrated, "I'll go one-up on that," he reached behind him and pulled out a Hookshot-like item. It had a grip handle on it like the Hookshot did, but in place of the grappling hook was a mid-sized spiked ball. "It's called the Maceshot. It extends fifty percent further than the Hookshot, but has obvious advantages over even the Longshot."

Link saw these advantages, "You're on."

They moved out into an open area facing Death Mountain. A third person volunteered to be the pitcher and got a baseball. They got some bats and were ready.

Link saw Zelda on the sideline watching the game.

As the Hylian knight stepped up to bat, Link gave his bat a few trial swings. Then, he watched as the pitcher threw the ball—and the knight promptly missed. Clearly flustered, the knight readied himself for the next pitch. The pitcher tossed another ball and this time he hit it. The ball traveled about three hundred feet before hitting the ground and then rolled another twenty feet.

"Beat that hot shot," taunted the knight.

Link took the knight's place in front of the pitcher and waited. The pitch came, but Link's swing missed it completely. Not only was it too low, but it was too soon. Link readied himself for the second pitch. It came but Link missed again. This time he over torqued his swing and went sprawling to the ground.

The knights all laughed and his competitor called, "Looks like that fancy shield is all mine!"

Link ignored him and cleared his thoughts. Then, he got up and readied himself and began to concentrate his energy as if he was going to do his spinning sword technique. He focused his energy into the bat. This time when the pitch came, he was ready and let the energy fly. This time bat met ball and the bat shattered on impact,

but the ball went flying. Goingâ€|Goingâ€|Out of sight.

The knight gave Link an exasperated look as he tossed aside the broken bat. He sounded almost angry when he said, "I don't know how you did that butâ€|" he paused and then calmly said, "If you can handle a sword half that well then you are the man. Here, you deserve this," he handed over the Maceshot.

Link gladly accepted it.

It had taken nearly the entire day, but Link and King Harkinan had managed to mobilize the troops and get them ready for the next day.

The sun was setting when Link asked about where they could stay for the night.

"Why don't you try the ranch on that nearby plateau?" suggested the King, "The people there are very kind and will surely accommodate you until morning.

He was talking about Lon Lon Ranch of course. On their way there Zelda explained that it was only named that when it began to thrive.

When the two reached the top of the entry ramp to the plateau, Link spotted a young woman with red hair. She had her back to them and didn't notice them coming up. She was humming a tune that Link was all too familiar with. In fact, this woman seemed very much like, "Malon?" said Link, he knew instantly that he should not have said that.

Fortunately, the woman was a distance away and misheard them, "Talon is tending to the horses," she called. She woman turned to greet them and Link noticed that she was \_very pregnant, "He'll be back shortly. I'm Marin, his wife. Can I help you?"\_

—

Link recovered realizing that the pregnant woman was Malon's mother. He and Zelda walked up to her. "I am Link and this is my consort Zelda. We were wondering if you could spare some room for us to sleep tonight."

"I'd have to check with Talon but I don't see why not."

Talon also extended his hospitality towards the two. After he gave them each a warm meal and a glass of milk (which fortunately was cold), Link and Zelda were given a room.

There was a bed with a straw-stuffed mattress on one side of the room, and an oil lamp sitting on a table next to it. The two both got a chance to bathe. Link let Zelda go first.

"That feels so much better," she commented when she returned.

When Link was finished, he came back and knocked on the door. Zelda said it was all right to come in, and he entered to find her in her nightgown. She may have had scratches on her hands and arms now, but she still looked radiant.

"Would you like me to sleep on the floor again?" asked Link as he hung his tunic on a hook where he had placed his sword.

Zelda shook her head, "The bed is big enough for two," she said.

Link nodded. He didn't show it, but his heart was beating like a racing stallion.

They got in bed, and Link extinguished the lamp leaving only the moon, stars, and Navi to dimly light the room. The room had only one window, but Link's eyes quickly adjusted.

Navi was sleeping on Link's hat, which was on a table.

They laid in silence for awhile, and Link was beginning to become drowsy.

Then, out of nowhere, Zelda bluntly but gently asked, "Link...do you love me?"

Link sat up and turned to her. She too sat up.

He had been unprepared to answer such a question. He was barely eighteen now and had never really tried to comprehend love beyond friendship and family. But still, he had always known that he felt something more for Zelda.

"It's ok if you don't," continued Zelda, "I just have to know."

Link looked into Zelda's eyes. He caressed her cheek as he said, "Zelda, I love you more than friendship and more than family. When we met so long ago, you were the first princess I had ever seen, and you are still the most beautiful. I couldn't imagine life without you anymore. So my answer is yes."

Zelda smiled and tears of joy filled her eyes, "Oh Link. I have waited so long to hear those words." They embraced each other.

He gently took her in his arms. Then, he kissed her. It was a soft kiss. Her lips felt so delicate that he wasn't sure how much pressure to apply. But then, she put her hand behind his head and pulled him closer. He pressed his body closer to hers.

When they finally pulled back, Zelda smiled. Link returned the smile.

"Do you two always do that when I'm asleep?" asked Navi jokingly. She was obviously up now and was fluttering a few feet away from them. Before either of them could work up an answer, Navi said, "I'll leave you two alone," and fluttered out.

Daylight filtered through the window and danced across Link's face. He tried to ignore it but soon was awake. He remembered the events of the night before. Zelda was finally sure how he felt about her. They had fallen asleep in each other's arms. It may very well have been the happiest moment of Link's life. Zelda had fallen asleep first, but that was all right. She was less accustomed to losing sleep than he was.

Link sat up and looked to Zelda. She was still asleep like a little angel. For a moment, Link watched the covers rise and fall as she took in air. Link looked at her softly and wondered what the future held for them. Then, he leaned down and kissed her on the lips.

After a moment her eyes fluttered open as if his kiss had awoken her from some enchanted sleep. She smiled, "Hey there," she said groggily, "I think that just made my day. If only the rest of the day would go so well."

"Yeah," agreed Link and smiled.

They got ready quickly. Link put on his Koriki tunic and sheathed the Duotane Blade. Zelda got dressed in the next room. When she came out he was putting on his green hat.

He turned to her, "You didn't by chance see Navi anywhere did you?"

"No," she replied, "but I haven't gone too far yet this morning. I'm sure she'll show up."

Link nodded in agreement. He hoped being displaced hadn't upset the little fairy.

The two walked out to the corral area and were surprised to find Navi sitting on Marin's shoulder. Marin was standing against the fence watching the horses run and play. They were talking and laughing.

Link heard Navi say, "You mean you've never heard of the Koriki?"

Marin said she never had.

"The Koriki each have a guardian fairy. I'm Link's. He never used to have a guardian fairy, but I felt sorry for him and started to tag alongâ€¦"

"Oh you did, did you?" asked Link. He thought that what Navi had said was amusing because the Great Deku Tree had had to practically order her to come with him. Even though they hadn't really liked each other at first, Link had to admit that he and Navi made a great team.

Navi squeaked when she found out that Link and Zelda had been listening, "I was just making conversation," she said as she darted over to Link.

Link, Zelda, and Marin all laughed. Then, Marin bent over slightly and held her stomach. She gave a small grimace of pain so Link and Zelda ran to her.

"I'm alright," she assured, "My baby just gave me a little kick to let me know that she's still there." Marin sighed, "In times like this I'm glad I'm having a daughter."

"Why is that?" asked Link.

"Haven't you heard?" she asked, "About a week ago the Gerudo sent out a decree that until the King surrenders, all newborn Hylian male will beâ€|slaughtered."

"How horrible!" gasped Zelda.

Marin nodded, "Just the other day I saw a woman with a newborn boy coming through Hyrule Field. We gave her what we could, then she headed toward the forest. I hope she's alright."

Link couldn't think of anything to say. He just had this feeling that every thing was on the balance as they spoke. It was all wrong.

They were given breakfast and wished luck on their journey. Link and Zelda were about to leave, but Link couldn't let such hospitality go without reward.

Moving to Talon, he removed his Hylian shield and held it out, "Here," he said, "for your kindness."

"I couldn't," said Talon shaking his head.

"Please," said Link, "I wouldn't feel right taking from you without returning something. At the very least, you could sell it."

Talon hesitated for a moment, but then accepted Link's gift.

"Thank you young man," he said. Then he turned to his wife, who was bringing up a horse, "Navi told my wife and I that you were going to be traveling all over Hyrule to day. So I arranged for some transportation for you," he motioned to the jet black steed, "This is Ebony. He's the fastest horse I ownâ€|smartest too. I doubt that he'll climb Death Mountain but he will get you there fast as the wind. Just get him back in one piece and I'll be happy"

"Thank you very much," said Link.

"Yes," added Zelda, "Your graciousness will not be forgotten."

They were off quickly and were making good time. The Hylian army would attack at noon and Link was confident that they would be able to clear out the base at Death Mountain and still make it in time to clear out the base at the mouth of Gerudo Valley just incase the army needed to fall back.

When Link and Zelda reached Kakariko Village, the two dismounted and climbed the stairs.

As they did, Zelda started to speak, "I remember that Kakariko Village was first built by the Sheikahs during the Hylian War as a base of operations. We may not be welcome there, but we must pass through it on order to reach Death Mountain."

When they reached the top of the stairs, Link saw many things that he didn't expect. Kakariko Village was in fact under construction. Many houses here being built as the two stood there. Many people were busy working and carrying supplies. There were stacks of bricks and piles of lumber everywhere. The only thing that looked as Link remembered it was the old windmill. It had been there for more than a century though if Link remembered it correctly.

Then, at the center of it all, Link spotted a familiar face. Link was surprised to see the woman although he probably shouldn't have been. She was much younger looking than Link remembered, but that was with good reason, it was now eighteen years prior to the last time he had seen her. Link looked and saw that the woman was caring for a small infant. It was Impa, and the child was Zelda.

Zelda saw her too and pointed her out.

Link nodded.

"Surely she'll help us," said Zelda.

Link didn't argue with the princess, but he was more skeptical than she was. Zelda was obviously thinking of the Impa that was her attendant and the Sage of Shadow. How else could she think of her? But in this part of her life, Impa looked far less disciplined and brash than she did later in life. Her blond hair had not yet faded to gray. Impa was ordering the other workers and directing the building process.

Link followed Zelda as she approached Impa.

As they came close, Impa noticed them and turned to acknowledge them. "What do you want?" she asked impatiently.

Zelda spoke, "My name isâ€|" she blinked realizing her name could give her away, "not important. My companion's name is Link."

"I'm very busy. State your business," said Impa.

Zelda continued, "Link and I have been hired by myâ€|by the King to liberate the base on Death Mountain. We were wondering if you could assist us." Zelda was flustered and obviously surprised by Impa's headstrong nature.

"Me help you?" said Impa as if it was some sort of unspeakable evil, "I don't have that kind of time. I have a town to have built and a princess to raise. I can't help you."

In response to Impa's harsh tone, the baby Zelda began to cry.

"Hush now little one," said Impa softly in a motherly tone, "Hush now, "

Though the baby princess would not be silenced. Impa swayed the child in her arms to no avail. She cried and cried.

Suddenly, Zelda suggested, "Why don't you try the Song of the Royal Family as a lullaby? I've been told that it calmed me when I was her age."

Impa seemed confused, but soon tried the suggestion. She hummed the tune and soon the baby girl was not only silent, but asleep.

Impa eyed them suspiciously, "Are you of Royal lineage?" she asked.

"I would not know that tune otherwise would I?" replied Zelda.

"I suppose not," agreed Impa, "You may do what you must on Death Mountain, but I must stay. I have too many responsibilities to go gallivanting around."

"I understand, and thank you."

Zelda was sure that she was noticeably disturbed by Impa's reaction to her. She was shocked by the woman's brashness. A lot must have happened in the years to come to change that undisciplined young Sheikah into the Impa she knew.

Still, Zelda couldn't shake the feeling that she had set events in motion with that one little tune. She wasn't sure if she had altered history or ensured it. A lot of things just weren't making sense. Like the fact that these Hylian bases had been invaded in the first place. History never recorded such events. It seemed as though time was not immutable after all. Agahnim really could do damage to the timeline.

The baby princess that Impa had been caring for was about a year old. Zelda was nineteen and knew Link had just turned eighteen so she was about a year older than he. That meant that Link could have been born anytime within a week or so. If Agahnim managed to find the young child of destiny she didn't even want to think about it.

After a while of walking, the two came to the bottom of a steep cliff. Zelda remembered no upgrade here and decided that an eruption would probably one day develop the terrain as she remembered it.

There were no foot or handholds in the rock face.

"We must have taken the wrong path," said Link, who was now sporting his mirrored shield, "We'll have to find another way up."

"Wait," called Zelda examining the rock ledge. She spotted an overhang and pointed it out. "Could the Longshot reach that?" she asked.

"It could," said Link, "But that ledge is solid rock. There is nothing to latch onto. Hmm" he considered something for a moment, then he removed the Maceshot from his item pouch. Aiming it in the air, he released the spiked ball upward. The mace shot up as if fired from a canon. It smashed a hole in the overhang then swung around and wrapped around its chain. Link scooped up Zelda and she held on tight. They quickly ascended the rock wall. When they reached the top, Link helped Zelda up and then climbed up himself.

Zelda looked over the edge of the cliff and took in the view. She could see all of Hyrule from where she was. "Look Link!" she said excitedly, "Isn't it beautiful?"

Link walked up to her and put his arm around her shoulder, "Yes it is," he said, "You can even see the castle from here. It's hard to believe that in a few short years this will all belong to Ganondorf. It is a shame what he did to this proud land."

"True," replied Zelda, she knew how he felt, "but it has to be. Even with good intentions, if we were to try to change the past, we would



be no better than Agahnim. The timeline must beâ€¦" Something caught her eye. It looked like a shadow, but when she moved to look at it there was nothing there.

"What is it?" asked Link, turning to see what she was looking at.

"I thought I saw something," she said, "but if I did, it is gone now."

"Hmmmâ€¦" said Link. Then he looked up at Death Mountain. "Those clouds don't look very good. We had better get in and out as quickly as weâ€¦"

As if responding to Link's warning, the entire Death Mountain range began to rumble and violently shake.

"Take cover!" yelled Link, but there was no shelter to be seen.

Zelda looked up just in time to see a large amount of rocks and debris eject from the mouth of the volcano. Fire and brimstone began to fall all around them. One stone impacted a few inches behind Zelda and caused her to lose her balance. She fell and over the side of the cliff she went. She tried to grab hold of somethingâ€¦anything, but there was nothing.

"Zelda!" cried Link. He dove down quickly and caught her by the hand. He was just beginning to pull her up when Zelda spotted a ball of fire heading down on top of him.

"Look out!" she called, but even she knew there was nothing he could do.

Although partially protected by his sword and shield, the brunt of the blow hit Link in the back of the head. He came crashing to the ground. Link fought to keep conscious, but Zelda could tell this was a battle that he was losing. Although he tried valiantly to hold on to her, Link's grip began to loosen.

"I love you Link!," she called preparing to fall to her doom, "Don't ever forget that."

Then, from behind a boulder a fire red cat quickly ran to where she dangled. It looked fierce and stealthy, but didn't attempt to attack her or her injured companion. Its blade-studded tail waved cautiously.

Then, to her surprise, it spoke, "Give me your hand!" it called.

Zelda was shocked, but quickly complied. Just as Link lost his grip, Zelda put up her other hand and the cat grabbed it in its mouth. Although Zelda felt the cat's teeth against her gloved hand, she felt no pain. The beast was actually being careful with her.

Moments later she felt herself rise up to safety.

The firestorm was over, that much Link could tell. When he opened he was blue sky. Zelda! She must have fallen! He hated himself for not being there when she needed him most.

Tears began to well up in his eyes as the realization hit him harder than any rock could. "Zelda," he said weakly, "No."

Navi was fluttering above him. To his surprise she called, "He's awake!"

A moment later, Zelda's worried face appeared over him. "Link! I was so worried!" She removed a bottle from her pouch. It was full of the Medicine of Life. She leaned his head up and held the bottle up to his mouth for him to drink.

When he finished, he asked, "Zelda, how could you be alright?"

"I had help."

Link strained to get up and that's when he saw it. A feral looking wild cat. Its red coat gave it a dangerous look. "What is that?"

"I'm a Catrion," said the cat?

"It can talk?" questioned Link. He was beginning to wonder if he was really awake.

"Yes, I do that," said the feline calmly. It was pacing back and forth, never taking its eyes off of him.

Zelda explained, "Link, this is Red Paw. He saved me."

Link let the information sink in, then he said, "I guess that I owe you a great debt of gratitude then Red Paw."

"It is nothing," said Red Paw. He stopped pacing and sat down.

"Link," said Zelda, "There is something you should know about Red Paw."

"What is that?"

"He is of a race of super intelligent animals. Despite this, the Carrion are hunted because their skin and bones contain large amounts of iron and titanium. They are slaughtered to make cheap but strong weapons and shields. Children and pregnant mothers are taken indiscriminately. In fact, in our time there are no more of this once proud race."

"Wait!" said Link, "shouldn't you be more careful about what you say?"

"I already know your secret," stated Red Paw, "She has done no wrong. I overheard you talking. Truthfully, I would not have saved her if you did not have something I wanted."

"And that is?"

"He wants to come with us," said Zelda, "To the future."

"I do not want my race to disappear without being heard.," said the

cat.

It seemed like a reasonable request, so Link agreed. They could probably use a hand anyway.

"I do plan on keeping my worth," assured Red Paw, "My body is capable of taking a lot of punishment as well as dishing it out. I'm sure I will be quite useful."

After awhile, Zelda, Link, and their new companion were in sight of the mountain base. It was mostly empty space, there were a few tents, most of which had been torn down and scattered.

There was though one thing that stood out. In the center of the camp was a gigantic stone creature. It looked like half a boulder, but it was huge. It had large 'angry' eyes and long segmented arms. At the end of each arm was a large stone spiked mace. Perched on top of this creature was a statue of a man seated upon a throne. Given his options, Link wasn't sure which was the brain of the thing.

"What is that?" asked Zelda.

Red Paw shook his head, "It is the Master of Stone. Meteo."

Zelda wasn't sure why they were approaching the base so boldly, but Red Paw said that the creature was slow to react and would not attack until they got close.

Sure enough, Meteo did not even respond to their approach. They were about fifty feet away from it when Red Paw stopped and said, "Link. That item that you used to ascend the cliff. You may be able to use it to bind Meteo's arms. Do so with caution though. Meteo is extremely strong from what I have seen of him."

Link removed the Maceshot from his item pouch.

Zelda wasn't sure how Meteo would react to being attacked, but she knew it probably wouldn't be pretty.

"Here's the plan," said Link, "I'll hold Meteo's arms. Then we'll have to stun himâ€¦a bomb should do the trick," he pointed to Zelda, "After that you freeze it with your magic. Then when it is good and slow from the cold, I'll smash the statue head with the Megaton Hammer. Got it?"

Zelda nodded although she had a sneaking feeling that it wouldn't be easy.

"What about me?" asked Red Paw.

"I'm not sure," replied Link, "Just use your head, I'm sure you'll be fine."

With that, Link took aim with the Maceshot and after a second, he released the mace toward its target. It didn't fail and wrapped around both of Meteo's mace-like hands.

But to even Zelda's surprise, Meteo reacted instantly and began to flail its arms wildly. Its mace arms were making huge holes in the ground as they struck it. Link struggled to stay grounded and get out

a bomb, but then Meteo turned to see its attacker, and when it saw the source of the attack, it began to whip its arms in unison. With this act it proceeded to fling Link around like a rag doll on a string.

Link yelled loudly as he was repeatedly whacked against the ground and rocks. "Willâ€|somebody â€|pleaseâ€|doâ€|something!" he yelled as he was flung around and around.

"All you need do is ask," stated Red Paw. He suddenly began a charge against Meteo. The cat ran at a surprisingly fast speed. Then, putting his head down, he powerfully head butted the stone creature.

Meteo roared in pain and dropped both armsâ€|and Link too. Although he looked very dizzy, Link took the opportunity to draw the Duotane Blade and slice off both of Meteo's mace arms.

Zelda did her part and focused her ice beam at the monster. As the creature's joints began to ice up, Link took out the Megaton Hammer and leaped up delivering a smashing blow in the statue's head.

Meteo roared again but this time he began to its stone body began to crack and crumble. Link was barely able to jump down before the 'Master of Stone' crumbled into rubble.

When Link regained his balance, he looked to Red Paw and said, "Now \_that is using your head." \_

—

After they had all rested, the party returned to Hyrule Field. The horse Ebony was still waiting for them when they left Kakariko Village.

Red Paw seemed to have no trouble keeping up with Ebony as the horse and its two riders streaked across the land. Zelda on the other hand was having trouble holding on so she clutched tightly around Link's chest.

It was about one o'clock by the time they reached the center of Hyrule Field and the Hyrulain army was long gone from where they had been. However, when they neared the entrance to Gerudo Valley, they saw the Army receiving instructions from the King.

"This will be a glorious battle!" proclaimed Harkinian, "The ones called Link and Zelda are even now taking advantage of this attack. We will take the Gerudo by surprise and return victorious," then, raising his sword high in the air he called, "May the way of the Hero lead to the Triforce!"

The army cheered and so the attack began. The army began to pile into the valley.

The battle was also beginning anew for Link, Zelda, and Red Paw. Their new target was near. The desert base was located at the mouth of Gerudo Valley, not far from where the army had just entered.

"I'll scout ahead," said Red Paw. Then he ran ahead. Soon he was out

of sight.

"Zelda?" said Link.

"What is it Link?" asked Zelda.

"Back there on Death Mountainâ€¦I'm so sorry that I couldn't save you."

Zelda shook her head, "Don't worry. I knew that it was dangerous when I came with you. I can't expect you to be everywhere."

"But I promised that I would be there for you always and I couldn't even keep that promise Iâ€¦"

Zelda put her hand over his mouth and gently hushed him, "Shhhâ€¦It's ok my love. You did what you could and I am safe now. I can ask no more of you."

They reached the base camp and found Red Paw stalking the perimeter. He looked frustrated and his tail was twitching. When the two got closer, he said, "I see nothing there." His metallic fur bristled in agitation.

"We'll go in together," said Link, "but be careful. We don't really know what we're dealing with."

Link was right. Zelda was sure of that. But soon she began to feel the same feeling of a presence that she had felt in the Underground Temple. She could see that Navi was changing colors very rapidly, but the little fairy kept quiet. Zelda could feel the presence all around them. This time though, the others did not seem to share her feeling.

Suddenly, Zelda felt the presence behind her and a booming voice began to laugh. The three turned around to see their adversary, it was Agahnim.

"Not so fast my friends!" Agahnim was hovering a few feet off the ground. "You simply must stay and play."

Link drew his sword and readied the mirrored shield, "You maniac! Agahnim! Do you even know the consequences of tampering with the timeline?"

"Of course I know the consequences. My master will be set free and his greatest adversary will be no moreâ€¦" the wizard smiled, "but you have me wrong."

"And what is that supposed to mean?" snapped Link.

"You see," the smile broadened, "I am not Agahnim." He laughed again. Then his skin began to crack and peel. His body swelled. When it was done, a helletic creature floated before them. It was a phantom! "I am Agahnim's undead servant: Wisp."

Wisp immediately began to balls of energy at the group. Zelda was forced to jump out of the way, as was Red Paw. Link just stood there and defended with his shield and the energy bounced off and returned to its source.

Wisp fell to the ground. Link did a diving strike with his sword, but the Duotane Blade went right through the ghostly creature.

"You foolish boy," taunted Wisp, "No weapon forged can harm us!" he recovered and took flight again.

"Us?" questioned Link, but Wisp only laughed. Link called to Zelda, "Use life magic on the creature."

"He's moving too fast!" Zelda responded, "When you stun it use a Light Arrow to slow it down!"

Again, Wisp began to use his magic shot attack. Link jumped in front of Zelda to protect her and reflected another plasma ball at the phantom.

The deflected magic hit its mark, then, Link fired a Light Arrow into Wisp's chest. The creature was overcome by the attack. Zelda seized the opportunity of Wisp's weakness and hit it full power with life.

"No!" cried Wisp. Suddenly it began to shrivel and shrink until it had degenerated into a spirit flame like a common Poe would. Only this flame was much brighter than any Zelda had ever seen.

Link removed a bottle from his pouch, "Hm!" he said, "I bet that old lady in Hyrule Castle Town who collects Poes would pay me a fortune for that thing. I'm going to catch it."

"No! You can't do that to me!" cried the flame formerly known as Wisp. However, Link proved it wrong and caught it anyway.

It was evening before the party reached the Koriki Forest. Ebony and Red Paw, not to mention Link and Zelda had needed to stop for a drink at a nearby stream. Afterward, they proceeded at a less grueling pace.

When they reached the edge of the forest, Red Paw stopped and said, "It's strange. I used to fear entering the forest. There are those who say it is haunted," the cat actually laughed. It was a sorrowful laugh though, "but we have just fought and defeated the most powerful ghost I have ever seen. I think now I can handle a few poltergeist."

"I'm glad," said Zelda. She was too. Still, Zelda had to wonder what had happened to the feline that had made him so hard on life. Red Paw had been very discrete about what he had told her. The cat saw his new companions merely as a medium to express some form of justice. He was using them, he had made that much clear. Link seemed fine with that, then again he had been most grateful of his saving Zelda's life. So was she for that matter.

They entered the forest and found it to be (other than the trees and shrubs) almost lifeless. Zelda at first wondered what was missing. Then it came to her, the trees were dark. The spirits and sprites that made the trees home in her time were nowhere to be found.

It made her uncomfortable, but she set her mind on their mission. "Where is the forest base?" she asked.

"The King said that it is near the clearing where the largest tree stands," Link replied, "I asked him if he meant the Great Deku Tree, but he didn't seem to know what I was talking about."

"Odd," said Zelda. The Deku tree had been around since Hyrule was created. How could the King of all people not know about it?

They reached the place where the Koriki should have been, but they found the clearing empty. The wooden huts were all there, but not one Koriki was to be found.

"I think this is the base," suggested Link, "Harkinian said that the base's structures had been made of carved trees," Link seemed to think about this for a moment, "I have a bad feeling about this."

Suddenly the ground beneath them began to rumble.

"This is it!" called Link, "It must be the Serpent Trio: Tricerio!"

Red Paw kept his body close to the ground to keep his balance, "Where are they?" he asked.

In response to the cat's inquiry, the ground split a few feet off his right flank and a gigantic serpent extended his body twenty feet in the air. The creature looked reminiscent of a dragon. It was red and had armored plates on its head. It had a hard jaw line and a mouth full razor sharp teeth. It screeched horribly. But it wasn't over. Several feet away from Link, the ground split again and a second snake-like creature emerged. It was identical to the first serpent, but it was icy blue. It screamed evilly. The ground continued to shake and Zelda turned around to see a green monster rise from the earth. It roared and eyed them hungrily.

Zelda looked around and realized that they were surrounded. They couldn't run without being picked off by one of the snakes. Looking at the serpents, Zelda realized that their colors were identical to the colors on the gemstones of the Elemental Keys.

"Link!" she called, "They're elemental creatures!"

"Right!" replied Link, "Zelda! You and Red Paw take care of the Tricerio of life! I'll handle Tricerio Fire and Ice."

Tricerio: Fire spat a beam of fire at Link. Using the mirrored shield, Link defended himself and redirected the beam at Tricerio: Ice. When the ice creature was struck, it screamed in pain and dove back into its hole.

At the same time, Red Paw leapt up on Tricerio: Life and dug his claws into its throat. It shook its head violently, but Red Paw clung tightly to the beast.

Zelda proceeded to drain the demon's life with her magic. Soon the beast fell and didn't get up.

Tricerio: Fire came down hard on Link. Link's shield became the only thing separating him from a wall of teeth.

Link removed the Ice Rod and beat back the creature with its ice magic. Tricerio pulled back roared in pain. Unsheathing the Duotane Blade, Link slashed at the stunned creature. Soon there was little left of it. Although it tried to slither away, Link did a diving strike and buried his sword into the creature's brain. Tricerio fell still.

Exhausted, Link sat on the ground. Zelda and Red Paw had already finished off Tricerio: Life. It had been a rough day, but now it was overâ€|Wait! No it wasn't!

Suddenly he remembered Tricerio: Ice, but it was too late. Tricerio leapt from a hole in the ground. Before Link could react, it wrapped around him. Link struggled but couldn't get free. Zelda began hitting the blue serpent with a fire beam and although it hurt Tricerio, the creature seemed determined to kill Link. The monster tightened its grip and squeezed the air from Link's aching lungs. Tricerio made to bite Link's head off. It might have done so too but a red blur leapt from the ground and butted heads with the serpent.

It was Red Paw. The blow stunned Tricerio and he dropped Link to the ground. Link gasped for air.

The ice creature succumbed to its opponents and fell to the ground. Link acted quickly and with two quick slices, he decapitated the creature.

The three creatures faded away. It was over.

Zelda had used her magic to heal Link's injured body, but he still was pretty sore. Link was actually pretty embarrassed at being caught off guard so easily. If Zelda and Red Paw hadn't been there, Link would have been snake food.

"Zelda. Red Paw. Thanks. I really messed things up but you two came through for me."

Red Paw merely nodded, but Zelda on the other hand said, "You were there for us too. You've been there for me more times than I can remember. Think nothing of it."

Link was glad that Zelda understood. He had been so unsure of himself lately. So many things had changed so soon, and so much was in the balance. Link wasn't sure if he could fulfill whatever twisted destiny was before him. He was glad to have such good friends (yes, he even viewed his metallic companion as a friend now) to help him. Link knew that whatever waited up the road, Zelda, Red Paw and Navi would be there to see him through it.

"Why don't we visit the Deku Tree?" suggested Link, "He will surely know of something that can help us."

"Good idea," agreed Zelda.

So, they headed through the path and into the clearing where the Great Deku Tree resided. They found him planted on the spot where he had always been. His ever watching eyes starred outward.

Link approached the Deku Tree.



"Great Deku Tree," called Link, "We have come a long way, through both distance and time. We have come to seek your wisdom. Will you help us?"

Link waited, but the Deku Tree remained silent.

"Perhaps that is a 'no'," suggested Red Paw thoughtfully.

Link shook his head. He wasn't sure.

"Maybe he will only speak to us if we are summoned," suggested Zelda, "Didn't you tell me once that the Deku Tree summoned you seven years ago?"

"Yes," replied Link, "but I also remember a time that I wandered into this clearing at night and the Deku Tree just started talking to me like any of the Koriki would have."

Link wasn't sure what all of this was supposed to mean.

Then, a booming laugh came over them, "Maybe he doesn't care!"

Link and the others turned to see Agahnim standing behind them. The wizard had a smug look on his face as though he thought he had said something funny. In Agahnim's right hand was the Master Sword. He held it up in front of him, "En Guard!"

Link addressed his friends, "Stay back! I'll handle this!" He was going to too! Link felt a new surge of courage fill his heart and a surge of adrenaline in his blood.

This wizard was almost as bad as Ganondorf. They had the same sadistic laugh. There was no way that Link was going to let Agahnim's plan (whatever it was) succeed. He was sure that Ganondorf figured into this mess somehow, but Link wasn't sure where.

Agahnim lunged at Link, attempting to skewer the Hylian, but Link side-stepped and the wizard stumbled forward.

Link slashed at the wizard, but his sword stopped dead on Agahnim's body. Link reeled in pain as a sudden jolt of electricity poured through the Duotane Blade and into Link's body. The shock wave knocked Link back several feet.

Link shook his head. As he regained his bearings, Agahnim laughed again, "You foolish halfwit! Not even the Master Sword can damage my. Your pathetic blade can do no harm!"

Link struggled to stand but couldn't; it hurt too much.

Then it happened.

Zelda watched as the Wizard Agahnim and Link fought. She knew that Link had no experience fighting forces like this dark wizard, and it showed. Although Link fought valiantly, he was overcome.

Link was struggling to get up as a shriek filled the forest. Zelda looked to find the source, but could see nothing. When she looked back, Zelda saw the scream had caught his attention too. He must have

realized that to take his eyes off of Agahnim was a mistake. Link had looked back even before Navi sounded her "Watch out!" warning.

It was too late though. Agahnim took advantage of Link's distraction. With the Master Sword in his hand, the Wizard Agahnim came down against Link. Link defended himself with the Duotane Blade but the Master Sword won out. It split the Duotane Blade in two.

Agahnim prepared to finish Link off when the originator of the scream became known. A woman came running through the forest. She seemed to be running from a predator unseen. She was injured; blood covered her one arm. In her arms was an infant child wrapped in a green blanket.

"Help! They're after my baby boy!" she yelled.

In the woman's confusion, the woman must not have realized that there was an altercation going on, for she began running right to them.

Agahnim on the other hand seemed to be expecting this event. He began to chuckle and then leapt in front of the woman. He stopped her violently and snatched the child from her grasp.

"My baby!" she cried.

Then Agahnim did the vilest thing that Zelda had ever seen the Master Sword do. He thrust it forward into the woman's abdomen. The woman jerked forward as the blade tore through her. Then she fell backward. Although mortally wounded, the woman continued to plead for her baby's life.

"Your baby? Heheâ€|your baby doesn't matter anymore," Agahnim said with disgust."

The baby began to cry and Agahnim held him up like a trophy. Dropping the Master Sword, the wizard removed a dagger from his belt. "With this child's death, my master goes free. Truthfully, I was not expecting to find you here. But when I saw you I thought it might be fun to watch Link be erased from history as I kill this child."

Link was up like a flash, "Agahnim, no!"

Suddenly Zelda made a startling realizationâ€|the child was Link! Or rather Link's younger self. Link's destiny was in the balance. If the baby died, Link would die with him.

Zelda bent down to Red Paw and whispered, "That child is Link! We can't let him die!"

Agahnim raised the dagger and prepared to slay the infant. Suddenly Link's body began to flicker and become translucent. He fell to the ground in pain as he was ripped through time itself.

"See," bragged Agahnim, "It is already happening." He laughed triumphantly, "And now the oppression ends. We are restored to our rightful place! My master goes free!"

"Red Paw I can't use my magic without risking injury to the baby," said Zelda desperately. It seemed as though all hope was lost.

Red Paw shook his head and said, "I don't know why I'm doing this butâ€|" even as the dagger began to descend, Red Paw was off like a flash.

Everything seemed to be going in slow motion to Zelda. Red Paw ran, kicking up dust and clumps of dirt as he went. Lunging toward Agahnim, Red Paw snatched the child in his mouth. The Catrion was gentle, and the child's blanket protected him from Red Paw's teeth.

Agahnim never slowed down though. Even though the child was snatched from the wizard's hand, the dagger he held came down hard; only the target changed.

Red Paw's eyes clenched as the dagger tore through his right side. Red Paw came crashing down on his side. He slid several feet before coming to a stop. The baby appeared uninjured. Red Paw placed him on the ground and then put his head down like an injured animal.

Zelda watched as Link's body became opaque and solid once more.

Snatching up the Master Sword, Agahnim gave a sarcastic bow, "I've done my part," he said smiled, "Without the Blade of Paradox, none of this is even possible! But still, there is much I must do. So, until we meet againâ€|" With that, Agahnim vanished.

Zelda ran up to Red Paw and Link's younger self.

"We are fine," confirmed Red Paw. The baby was still crying. "Go tend to the boy!"

By 'boy', Red Paw had meant Link, her Link. Zelda looked around for Link but he was not where he had been. Zelda looked to see him dragging himself up to his mother. She had thought that the woman was dead, but now she could see that she was still moving.

Zelda decided to let Link have the moment.

Link was obviously in pain, but he still sat up and held the woman in his arms. Zelda could tell that it was too late to save her. And even so, damage done by the Master Sword could now be repaired.

"Pleaseâ€|" the woman pleaded. She coughed up blood, "Please take careâ€|of my baby. He's all I have left." She looked Link curiously in the eyes, "butâ€|why would that manâ€|think that you would dieâ€|ifâ€|my baby did?"

Link gazed down at her. Tears filling his eyes, "That boy," he began, "your baby. He will grow up to become meâ€|Mother, I've never had a chance to really know you. But before it's too late, I want you to know that I turned out alright."

She seemed to understand. She placed her hand on Link's cheek and smiled, "My little boy. My little Link," she coughed, "Iâ€|Loveâ€|" Link's mother tried to take in another breath, but didn't make it. She went limp in Link's arms.

Link clutched his mother tightly to him for a moment.

Zelda walked up to Link.. There were tears running down her cheeks. Zelda could tell that Link was crying although she couldn't see his face. Link kissed his mother's forehead and let her slip to the ground.

"She finally knows," he said soberly.

"Link, are you ok?"

Link turned to her. His cheeks were moist, but he forced a sad smile, "Yeahâ€¦"

Link stood. He eyed the broken Duotane Blade wearily. The Hylian's body ached, but it was dwarfed by the pain in his heart. Link was sure that the smashed sword was important, but at the moment he didn't care.

Suddenly a breeze blew through the forest. It sounded as if the forest was inhaling. Link turned to see the Great Deku Tree and his voice came upon them.

"Long have I watched over this forest," he said, "but thou hast opened mine eyes to my neglect."

"Deku Tree," called Link, "why have you not speak to us until now?"

For a moment the Deku Tree was silent as if he was choosing his words carefully. Then, he said, "Throughout the years, I have watched these woods all by myself. Mayhaps in those years I became numb to that which happened around me, but now I see that I have grown stagnant.

"However, my watchful eye shall see once more. I foresee many changes in our land. The future is still uncertain. If you wish, I will raise this baby boy for I sense that he will be instrumental in Hyrule's future. Surely this is a child of destiny."

"That is how it was meant to be," stated Link. He glanced down at his mother's body almost wishing it were not so.

"Link," the Deku Tree called back his attention, "This is your mother is it not?"

Link nodded.

"It would be cruel for this woman to never know how her son grew and developed. Although I cannot bring her back, I will allow her life force to watch over her child until the end of time."

Link stepped back as light bathed his mother's body in a golden glow. Her features disappeared as she became the light. Then, the light broke into a billion pieces and dispersed. Link watched as the little lights spread out and began to dance throughout the forest.

Again tears flowed down Link's face. "Thank you Deku Tree," he said.

"My work is far from over," the tree stated, "I will fill this forest with innocent children so that this Child of Destiny will never be lonely," he paused, "But first I will breath life for a caretaker. One who will teach the little Link to talk and interact with others."

The Great Deku Tree opened his mouth. Link knew that one day he would do this again, but on that day the Deku Tree would ask Link to enter and destroy the death curse that would be placed on him.

Out of the Deku Tree's mouth strode a small girl. Above her head fluttered a little fairy. Link recognized her even though she was much younger. Her skin was as tan as his, and her eyes were green, but Link recognized her purplish blue hair. Link couldn't help but pity her when he thought about what she would one day become.

The girl walked up to him, "He mister, I'm Frost."

Link smiled and knelt down, "Hi Frost, I'm Link." Then he looked to the Deku Tree, "We must go and stop Agahnim. It wasâ€¦good to see you again."

At first the Great Deku Tree said nothing, but eventually he said, "I see. It seems my fate is already sealed. Do what you must."

Magic just didn't seem to affect Red Paw. Although Zelda had tried to heal his wounds, the heal spell just wouldn't take effect.

\_Just like a Hylian shield, mused Zelda, \_that must be why these poor creatures are hunted. Zelda had watched Link use his Hylian shield to defend himself from magic attacks more than once. In their time, shields were made from advanced magical alloys, but in this time they would not have the benefit of such technology. Still, it didn't justify the actions of these poachers.\_\_

—

Her father must have known about this. Why didn't he do something?

Since he was wounded so badly, Red Paw had been left with Frost and the Deku Tree. The cat had not wanted to stay, but he could barely stand. Eventually though, Red Paw had conceded and said that he would join him as soon as possible.

Zelda was now exiting the Koriki Forest with Link trailing a few paces behind her. Link was strangely quiet, but that was to be expected. She thought of the pain that her love must be enduring. It almost made her shutter. Link had gone through something that she was glad she never had to. She could tell how he felt, but she knew that he felt much more strongly than she.

In Link's hands were the pieces of the broken Duotane Blade. He dropped them to the ground and stopped.

"I think this is important," he said, "We need some help. I think the idea of the Sword of Paradox is important, but I'm not sure what to do."

Zelda thought about that for a moment. It seemed kind of obvious,

"Saria said that she could answer any question that we had. What about the 'Song of Sages'?"

"Good idea," Link still had the Ocarina of Time which Zelda had given him. He removed it and played the song that would call Saria.

When he finished playing the last note, Saria appeared before them. Her body was translucent, but she was easily recognizable.

She opened her eyes and spoke, "I have heard your call. How may I be of assistance?" It was then that she must have seen the Duotane Blade for she gasped, "By Nayru's unwavering courage! What has happened to the Duotane Blade?"

"Agahnim caught me off guard," explained Link.

"It must be repaired. It is the Sword of Paradox!" Saria seemed ecstatic, "It is the sister sword of the Master Sword. However, the Duotane Blade was never forged."

"What do you mean?" asked Zelda. She had to admit that this was a little strange.

Saria shook her head, "The Duotane Blade was there for you in the future only because you are supposed to place it in the Underground Temple here in the past. But if it has been destroyed, then all of this will never be in the first place."

"So that's that Agahnim meant!" said Link.

Saria continued, "You must find a way to repair it or the timeline will suffer."

"Saria, I fought Agahnim, but I couldn't even hurt him. How can I defeat him?"

"I will tell you this: Agahnim is a soulless puppet who was created by Ganon. Fighting Agahnim should be similar to fighting Ganondorf, but as mere puppet, Agahnim is invulnerable against the attacks of others. Similarly, The Master Sword cannot be touched by those who are evil, but Agahnim could take it because the evil heart that drives him is not his own. You will find a way."

"How do you know so much about this time?" asked Zelda.

Saria smiled, "I do not know." Then she vanished.

They headed for Hyrule Castle Town, and as luck would have it, they made it there just before dark. They searched through the streets and back alleys until they came across a blacksmith's shop. Link and Zelda entered it.

Inside, a man who looked strangely like Bazaar greeted them.

"Hey buddy. What can I do for you? Make it quick, it's late."

Link stepped up to the man and his anvil. There was a forging oven and a large mallet near him. "Sir," he showed him the broken blade, "My sword was damaged and it is imperative that it is repaired. Will you please fix it for me tonight?"

"Tonight?! I was hopin' to get to sleep early tonight. That will be a difficult break to repair. Listen buddy, if you want me to repair it before mornin' it will cost you a thousand rupees."

"A thousand rupees?" questioned Link, "That practically robbery! We don't have that kind of money."

"Take it or leave it kid," said the man.

It was then that Link noticed the bottles on the far wall. There were several rows of them. Most of them were empty, but some of them had Poe spirit flames in them.

"What are the soul fires for?" asked Link.

"Oh dem?" asked the blacksmith, "I use dem to repair weaponry. They let me drop-forge damaged items without using much new metal. Plus, the magic of the Poe lets me seamlessly repair weapons like new. I've been having trouble finding a supply of them lately though."

Link thought for a moment. Then he asked, "How about a trade?"

"What you got?" the man asked.

Link pulled Wisp, the powerful soul fire that he had caught in a bottle. "How about this?"

The man looked at the bottle for a moment, "Well, well, well. That really is a rare find. That would keep my blast furnace lit for weeks." He paused for a moment, "Tell you whatâ€¦it's a deal. It'll be done by morning."

"Excellent," said Link. He handed over the soul fire and Duotane Blade, "In the mean time, do you know of a place that I and my companions could bed for the night?"

"Sureâ€¦but what do you mean by 'companions'? I see only the young lady here."

Link pointed up at Navi who was fluttering above him.

"Well I'll be. You've got a little fairy as a pet."

"HEY!" exclaimed Navi, "I'm no pet! I'm Link's guardian fairy."

"Ok. Sorry. There's an inn a few doors a down. I doubt you can miss it."

The Inn had been easy enough to find. Link and Zelda got a room and prepared to go to sleep for the night.

Zelda noticed that Link was unusually distant. He was almost cold in his mannerisms. He wasn't treating her badly, or taking it out on her in any way, but he seemed to be avoiding talking to her.

As soon as he had paid for their room, Link had gone out somewhere without even telling her. Navi didn't even know where he was. He had left without her. Zelda wished he would open up to her, but she wasn't sure how to comfort her love.

After bathing and changing into her evening gown, Zelda entered her room to find that Link still had not returned. Zelda laid on the bed and thought about the events of the day. As she starred at the ceiling, Navi landed next to her and looked at her for a moment.

After a moment of silence, Zelda looked at the little fairy. "What is it?" asked Zelda.

"Link knew this would happen," said Navi, "He tried to deny it, but now reality is starring him in the face."

Zelda sighed, "I know. Link told me about the dream he had. At first I didn't want to believe it either, but now when I think about it, Link's visions are much more literal than mine. I remember seven years ago when I had the dream that first made me fear Ganondorf. It was so figurative that I did not know at first what to make of it. However, Link's nightmare of Impa escaping from Hyrule castle with me came completely true."

Navi nodded, at least it looked like she was nodding to Zelda. The light the little fairy gave off made it hard to see her features. "You are young Zelda," said Navi, "One day you will wake up and you will realize that no one ever really finishes maturing. I know that you hold the power of the Triforce of Wisdom, but even that is only as good as its user. When you realize that you are more than the sum of your parts nothing will be able to stop you. You must learn to guide your passions. Then you will truly be a great queen."

Zelda understood, but knew that Navi was talking about the future. Zelda wanted to talk about now! "Right now I'm worried more about Link than anything else. You're Link's guardian fairy, what can I do to make him whole again?"

"I wish I could give you some magical cure," said Navi, "but I can't. All I can say is if you love him, go to him. The words are not important, only the feelings."

Zelda took in Navi's words and realized she was right.

She found him on the roof of the inn. Link was just laying there staring at the sky. In his hand was Saria's tiny Fairy Ocarina. He wasn't playing it, only clutching it to his chest.

The moon shown down illuminating them both. It seemed that its rays were only for them.

With some difficulty, Zelda climbed some vines and ascended to the roof. She laid down next to him on his right side and kept silent for a while, not worrying about her words like Navi had said. She would do her best to be there for Link emotionally.

After several minutes of silence, Link removed his right hand from his ocarina and held it wanly out for her to take. She gingerly put her hand in his and gave his hand a little squeeze.

Zelda waited another moment until Link spoke, "Hey Zel?"

"What is it Link?" she asked.



"Thank you for coming to find me," he said, "I didn't really want to be alone, just away."

"Away from people?" Zelda questioned.

"Away from myself."

Zelda knew that Link's big heart had broken when he watched his mother die. The same thing happened when her father died, only she hadn't seen what had happened to him. She was sure that what Link felt was much worse.

There was only one thing that she could think of to say, "You can never escape yourself. Believe me, I've tried. Sheik was more than a simple disguise. When I was him, my pain wasn't quite so bad," she shook her head at the memory, "but it never went away. The more I tried to hide from it, the more the heartbreak seemed to chase."

Link said nothing at first. Then he looked at her. There was a little surprise in his eyes as he said, "Zelda, you must be freezing cold. You shouldn't have come out here in your nightgown."

He hadn't responded to what she had said, and he never would, but it didn't matter. He understood what she meant. Link did have a point though. The night was cool and she had already caught a chill.

"Let's get you inside," said Link.

Link helped Zelda down from the roof and they went to their room. Although little happened between them that night, Zelda felt as though she had never been closer to Link.

That night Link's dreams became vivid once more.

In his dream a great Warrior of Heart strode courageously through both time and space to meet his destiny. The warrior's destiny would manifest itself in the form of a great battle. If he won that battle, peace would settle over his land for a time. However, if that battle was lost, his homeland would fall into chaos forever.

Although the hero had fate on his side, the opposition he was up against was great. And although the warrior fought bravely, he fell.

Link awoke early the next morning with a strangely optimistic feeling. At first he did not remember the dream he had had the night before. Gradually though, the memory came back into his conscious mind. \_What could it have meant?, he wondered. For once he just didn't know. It disturbed him but he forced it from his mind. He was in too good a mood to think of such matters.\_

—

Link looked to Zelda who was laying to his right. She was laying on her side facing away from him. She was still asleep. Her hair still smelled of the flowery shampoo she had used. Link took in the fragrance. He moved her hair to expose her pointed ear. He

smiled.

It was strange, everything about Zelda seemed to invigorate him this morning.

Link ran his index finger from Zelda's temple the tip of her ear. He did it only to feel its warmth and outline. Suddenly she twitched and her hand reached out and grabbed his.

"That tickles," Zelda said softly and sleepily. She maneuvered herself around so that she was facing him. She smiled.

"Sorry," he said, not sure if she was actually scolding or not. He had not intended to wake her up, only caress her. It was still early yet and the sun was only beginning to shine through the window.

Zelda seemed to be in as good a mood as he was. She smiled, showing her pearly white teeth. "It's ok Link. Any waking hour is worth spending as long as it is with you."

Link was surprised by Zelda's sentimental tone. It made him feel warm inside though so he was glad. He leaned forward and kissed her on the lips. She put her arm around him and they embraced passionately for several moments.

When they separated, Zelda frowned, "There's something you're not telling me," she said with a curious look, "Is something bothering you?"

Link was shocked that Zelda had sensed his troubled thoughts. He was sure that he had given no outward signs of it.

"It's nothing," he said not wanting to upset Zelda.

"Please," she pleaded. It seemed important to her.

"Alright," he said finally. He got out of bed and briefly described the strange dream he had.

"You're right to be upset by it," Zelda assured, "but with any luck it was just a dream."

Link agreed.

They both got ready to get an early start on the day. Zelda got into her shirt and vest while Link changed into his Goron Tunic.

After that they went to the blacksmith's shop to pick up the Duotane Blade. It looked as perfect as when Link had pulled it from the Underground Temple. Zelda knew that that is how they would find it eighteen years from now. It seemed ironic that after all they had learned and done, things turned out pretty much the same as they were supposed to. Zelda was glad of that.

They traveled back to the Underground Temple and traversed the Maze of Lost Souls once again. This time though, they found it to be curiously empty. Zelda felt no edginess or fearâ€¦no presence at all. Zelda guessed that it was not yet long enough for all of the souls to become trapped in its grip.

Link placed the Duotane Blade in the pedestal and they exited the temple without mishap. Upon exiting the Underground Temple though they saw Red Paw.

He seemed to be almost one hundred percent better. There was a scar on his side, but the wound was no longer open. He was several hundred feet away, but Zelda could see that Red Paw had his head down and was sniffing the ground, apparently following their trail. The cat's bladed tail waged as one stalking prey.

"Hey Red Paw!" called Link, "We're over here!"

When he heard Link's voice, Red Paw looked up and quickly traversed the distance between them, "You two are hard to keep track of," he said.

"Red Paw," said Zelda, "how is it that you have healed so quickly?"

"It is a trait of my race," stated Red Paw anxiously, "That though can wait. I have news. I overheard some people talking. They said that a man in a flowing red cape, Agahnim, has broken into the Temple of Time!"

Red Paw was not quite as agile as he had been, but the three hurried quickly back to Hyrule Castle Town. Link and Zelda mounted Ebony and rode while Red Paw ran along side. About twenty-five minutes later, they reached their destination.

Link and Zelda dismounted and waited for Red Paw to catch up. Zelda knew the cat was hurting for he was running much slower than the day before. If he wanted to come with them so badly though, Zelda would not protest and deny him what little hope he had.

Anyway, after this battle Zelda and Link would either be returning to the future orâ€¦ Either way, Red Paw might as well be there. Either to join them in the future, or to tell their tale.

Link led the way through Hyrule Castle Town. They were going to have to formulate a plan and find out what Agahnim was doing in the Temple of Time, so they could stop him before he did it.

When they neared the Temple of Time, Link spied a large group of people near its entrance.

Link was sure that they would not be happy to see a Catrion strolling amongst them. He glanced down at Red Paw who was looking cautiously at him.

"Stay close. Both of you," warned Link. Then he added, "Don't worry Red Paw. If anyone makes trouble, we'll protect you."

Red Paw nodded, "Thank you."

When they approached the crowd, the people eyed them wearily. Then, one of them stepped forward and said, "What is that \_thing doing here?" It was Ingo, the future ranch hand of Lon Lon Ranch! He looked at them with disgust.\_

—

Link stepped forward, "Red Paw is with us. He is under our protection. So, if you want us to take care of Agahnim, I suggest you get out of our way!"

Ingo shook his head, "I don't think so!" he pointed his finger angrily at the cat, "No monster whose race murders innocent children should be aloud to survive. The Catrion are no better than the Gerudo!"

Suddenly Red Paw leapt in front of Link. He arched his back, "The King's Generals lie! They only want to finance their stupid war with my people's flesh and blood. My people want nothing to do with the Hylians!" he barked, "However, your people who claim to be civilized, are responsible for the murder of my mate, Harmony, and our three cubs!"

\_So that's Red Paw's story, thought\_ Link. No wonder he had been so cold to them at first.\_\_

—

Ingo scoffed at that, "I say we string this monster out to dry!"

A small number of the others agreed and gave a resounding, "Yeah!" Some of them began to advance on the three. Link, who no longer had the Duotane Blade, prepared to draw the Biggoron Sword.

Then a woman's voice called out, "Stop!" It was Marin. She marched right up to Red Paw and blocked the advance of the others. "Ingo!" she scolded, "I'm tired of you stirring up trouble. If you want to harm this poor creature you're going to have to go through me!"

She glanced down at Red Paw who was looking up at her with amazement. He actually seemed to be smiling.

Ingo gave Marin an exasperated look, "Aww, come on Marin! you know I would never hurt you."

"Then let them do what they must," said Marin with conviction. Then she looked to Link and Zelda, "Go on," she said, "Old Ingo is just a bag of wind anyway."

"Thank you," said Link, "By the way, Ebony was a fine horse. We left him back by the gate."

Marin nodded.

Link, Zelda, and Red Paw began to ascend the stairs to the entrance of the Temple of Time. No one bothered them this time. Link was about to enter the door when turned around to see that Red Paw had stopped.

"Thank you Miss," he said, "It is refreshing to see that there are those who are not so prejudice as some have proved to be."

With that, Red Paw turned and ran inside.

The interior of the Temple was eerily quiet. Link would almost think

that it was empty. The Door of Time was open once more though and a strange glow emanated from the inner chamber.

Link turned to face his friends. He had a few ideas, but wasn't sure how well they would work. From his item pouch, Link removed two crystals. Within them burned a magical light. One was blue, the other was red.

Link handed to Zelda the blue crystal and said, "This is called Nayru's Love. It will protect you with an unbreakable force field. I want you to use this. However Red Paw, magic doesn't affect you so I hope this doesn't either," he held out Din's Fire, "It will release a powerful blast of fire. I want you to slow down Agahnim in any way you can until I can figure out how to defeat him."

"Don't worry, I can take the heat. I did make Death Mountain my home you know."

They all nodded.

Link was satisfied, "Ok, let's go."

They entered the next chamber and found the source of the glow. Agahnim was there. He didn't notice them for he had his back to them. Agahnim's attention was on what he was doing, and it from what it looked like he was preparing to cast a spell.

Link could see the Master Sword in the wizard's left hand. His right hand was enveloped in a bluish white glow.

As if sensing what Agahnim was about to do, the Triforce of Courage suddenly lit up bright blue on Link's left hand. He glanced at Zelda who was looking at her right hand. The Triforce of Wisdom had begun to glow bright green.

Agahnim must have sensed the increase in activity behind him. He stopped what he was doing and let his arms fall to his sides.

Agahnim did not turn around but began to speak, "I cannot hear my master's voice anymore. We are separated by time itself. But don't worry, he has prepared me for just such an occasion. I have decided to chance my tactics."

"I don't care about you or your stupid master!" yelled Link. He was suddenly very angry again, "You murdered my mother and now you're going to pay!"

"Oh Link," Agahnim laughed, "She was dead before we even began our game of cat and mouse. Some things are simply meant to be. You know that."

"That doesn't mean I have to like it!" said Link sharply. His heart still beat with his human passion. Link wouldn't let Agahnim talk him into thinking that his mother's death was right.

"True. And I am sure that you will not like this either. It seems that time is not immutable but like a river it constantly corrects its flow when interrupted," Agahnim turned to face them and whipped his cape around. He sneered and called, "But you're too late! Even if

I cannot change the past, I will still alter the future. Once you are gone no one can stop me!" With that, Agahnim leapt into the air and took flight, "En Guard!"

"Now Zelda!" called Link.

Zelda immediately activated Nayru's Love and a blue crystalline shield formed around her. Link used Din's Fire and thrust the crystal the ground. It emitted a dome of fire. Red Paw ducked to the floor and the magical fire passed over him with no ill effects. Zelda however was not so lucky. The wall of flame knocked her backward but she was unharmed. When Din's Fire hit Agahnim, he yelled in pain and fell back to the ground, but stood immediately. He was apparently uninjured.

Suddenly Navi lit up bright green. She flew over to Agahnim and began to dart around his head. "Link!" she called, "Agahnim's magic is like a double-edged sword! You have toâ€¦!"

"Quiet insect!" Agahnim swatted Navi with his backhand. The little fairy was knocked hard into a nearby wall. She gave a little squeak when she hit and then fell to the ground unconscious.

"Navi!" called Link. He could only hope she was alright, but they had to fight on, "Red Paw! You're on!"

"Right!" Red Paw leapt and pounced on Agahnim. With his teeth, he clamped down hard on his shoulder.

Agahnim screamed in pain, but managed to rip Red Paw off of him. He rose quickly and kicked the cat in his wounded side.

Red Paw yelped and was forced to back off.

Zelda used her crossbow to launch a light arrow at the wizard. It hit him in the side but even its sacred power could not stop him. Agahnim quickly shrugged it off.

Then, Agahnim held his hands in front of him, palms facing each other, and an arch of energy began to dance between his fingers. The energy built up into a ball of light. The wizard released the ball of energy and shot it at Link.

Link, with the Biggoron sword, slashed at the magic to deflect it, but his sword went right through it and struck him and sent him sprawling to the ground. Link called out in pain as surges of energy washed over his body.

"Foolish boy," said Agahnim, "The only weapon that can repel my magic is the Master Sword, and I have that!" He laughed.

Link stood and decided to chance his tactic. If no weapon he had could do the job, then he would take on a defensive posture. Sheathing the Biggoron sword, Link readied the Mirrored Shield.

Agahnim charged another shot and fired it at Link, but this time he was ready. Link held his shield up and the magic blast bounced right off and hit Agahnim square in the chest. Agahnim went flying back.

He stood, but was clearly in pain, "Well metâ€¦Like the true hero thatâ€¦you are," his body was beginning to break up, "You think you've wonâ€¦and perhaps you haveâ€¦but another timeâ€¦another heartâ€¦I will return!"

Agahnim heaved as his body exploded. He was completely destroyedâ€¦the Master Sword fell to the ground where he had stood.

Link just stood there for a moment, relieved that it was finally over. Zelda came up behind him and put her hand on his shoulder.

"Link, you did it!" she said.

"We did it," replied Link. He looked to Red Paw and when he was that sure he was ok, Link went to see Navi.

Navi was still on the floor, but was standing, "My wing is broken," she cried, "I can't fly."

Link scooped her up and sat her on his shoulder, "Will you be ok?" he asked concerned.

"I'll heal thank you," she said, "but now, please take me back to the forest, our forest, in the future."

"You're right. It's time for us to go home, and you Red Paw, to your new future."

Zelda cheered and gave Link a kiss on the cheek..

Red Paw nodded, "Shall we then?"

Link nodded. Then, he picked up the Master Sword and they headed up to the Pedestal of Time. Link thrust the Sword of Evil's Bane back to its resting place. As the Triforce symbol below them lit up, a familiar light obscured all and the Time Stream took them.

Zelda had expected to see the Temple of Time when she opened her eyes, and though this place looked hauntingly similar, it was also much different.

The princess saw Link and Red Paw standing at her side.

"Where is this place?" asked Red Paw.

Where indeed? They were standing on a metal platform at the center of six other platforms. Each platform had one of the temple symbols on it: Forest, Fire, and Spirit among others. Waterfalls of light poured down from an unseen ceiling. Zelda had never seen this place, or any like it before.

"It has been a while," said Link, "but I think that this is the Chamber of Sages. It is deep within the Temple of Light. But whyâ€¦?"

Suddenly the platform with the 'light' symbol lit up and Rauru rose up from the symbol, "Because there is something that you must

know."

The forest symbol lit up and Saria rose from it, "You have done well and ensured the timeline, but it is not over yet. You three are in the wake of one last adventure."

"Yes Brother," Darunia appeared on the symbol of the Temple of Fire, "There is still one more thing that you and your friends must do must."

The Zora Princess appeared on the Symbol of Water and smiled, "Friends are very important. Remember that no matter how many minions Ganondorf has, he has no true friends. You have the advantage."

"Princess, you must help Link fulfill his destiny," it was Impa, "You are a woman and one day a queen. I have guided you ever since you were a baby—ever since that day when I—|you showed me that you would become the Princess of Destiny. I remember it well and I know you can do it. Be strong."

"I will my beloved attendant. Now and always," called Zelda.

Impa nodded.

"Hey Kid!" called Nabooru from her spot on the Spirit symbol, "It is time for you to finish what we started so long ago. You've had time now to master the power of the Triforce of Courage. You are more than ready."

"But I still don't know much about the power I hold," said Link, "I don't know if I am ready to do whatever it is I need to."

Rauru motioned for his attention, "You know more than you think. I have confidence in you."

"Just remember," cautioned Saria, "blind courage is foolish and passion negates wisdom."

"Hey Zelda," called Ruto. Zelda turned to see what she wanted, "Princess to Princess, hold on to that one. Link's slipperier than a fish but he's got more heart than a Biggoron. Your children will be beautiful too."

"I'm beginning to understand," said Zelda, she couldn't help but blush, "Thank you."

Red Paw looked to Saria, "You are a Koriki like the girl I saw in the Forest are you not?"

"I am," she said simply.

"I thought so. You wear the same clothing. I have something to tell you then Saria—I believe that that is your name."

"Yes. How did you know?" asked Saria.

"Before I left the forest, the Great Deku Tree told me that you would be a skilled musician because he would form a girl from the music of the forest. That which has always lived and never dies. That is why



you know so much."

Saria took in the information but said nothing.

"But now," said Rauru, calling their attention back to him, "now is the time of your greatest challenge. There are goals that you can only reach by working together. Go home now and complete this day with honor and bravery. Go!" he raised his arms and again they were taken by the light.

When the light released them, Link gasped at what he saw. They were in the Temple of Time, but there was practically no temple to speak of. A large portion of the temple had collapsed revealing the afternoon sun. There was blast damage and rubble everywhere as if someone had taken a large amount of explosives and detonated them in the room. There was too much damage to even hope to restore most of it. Most strikingly though was that the Pedestal of Time was gone and in its place was a large door with the Triforce symbol engraved on it. There was nothing that Link could see on the other side of the door. It just stood there.

Link was still holding the Master Sword so he sheathed it.

Zelda looked around in horror, as the others just stared.

"Wow!" said Navi with a mixture of awe and sadness.

"Is this the Temple of Time? When did this happen?" asked Red Paw.

"I don't know," said Zelda, "This is not how we left it," then she breathed, "What has happened here?"

"This must be Ganondorf's doing," said Link, "but what is this door?"

"I think," said Zelda. Link watched her step up and scrutinize the door, "Oh Goddesses! This must be the hidden entrance to the Temple of Light!"

"Well it isn't hidden anymore," said Link.

"Do you know what this means?" asked Zelda.

Link didn't and told her so.

"If the door to the Temple of Light is the only real barrier between our world and the Sacred Realm. Not that it has manifested itself, Ganondorf may be able to build up his power until he can force it open."

Link didn't like the sound of that. "Not good," he said, "In that case we must endeavor to find out what has happened here today. There must be someone who saw or heard what happened here."

"You're right. There is still hope then," Zelda seemed to be lifted by his words.

He was trying to be as confident as he could, for if he lost heart, what would the others do?

They exited the Temple of Time to find a crowd similar to the one that had been there in the past. There were a few new faces and a few that were not there now. Malon was there in place of her mother Marin and Talon was there. Ingo looked in fair spirits, but then again that was a lot for him.

In the back of the crowd, Link could have sworn that he saw Saria, but when he looked more closely, he saw nothing.

Malon was the first to approach them, "We've been waiting for you. We knew you'd come."

"What happened?" asked Link.

"There was an explosion of magic a few hours ago," said one citizen.

"A big bright bluish white light enveloped the temple and wellâ€¦you can see for yourself," said another.

"I swear it was like about eighteen years ago when that psychopathic wizard broke into the temple," said an old man.

Several others agreed with him.

"Agahnim!" hissed Link. Even from the grave he caused damage. "He altered the future without causing a noticeable change in the past. Just like he said."

"You're rightâ€¦" said Zelda, but then she cut her self off.

Link saw that she was looking at Red Paw with a disturbed look. Red Paw was walking up to Malon as if he knew her. Then it dawned on Link that the cat thought he did.

"Hello Miss," he said, "It has been a while for you but you haven't aged a day. Tell me, how is your child?"

"Myâ€¦child?" asked Malon. She sounded confused and had a right to be.

Zelda knelt down and whispered Marin's fate softly in Red Paw's ear.

The Catrion's back arched with embarrassment as he realized his error, "I am sorry Miss. A case of mistaken identity."

Malon nodded.

"Hey cat," it was Ingo, "Don't I know you? Of course I do. I thought you were extinct but I guess I was wrong. Truth is I was wrong about a lot of things. I'm sorry about what I said all those years ago."

"It seems a lot of things have changed," said Red Paw, now it was his turn to sound confused, "Your apology is accepted sir."

Link spoke, "We are going to have to put a stop to Ganondorf once and for all, but firstâ€¦" Link picked Navi up off of his shoulder,

"Malon, will you take care of Navi for me. She's injured."

"Sure," said Malon. She extended her hand and gently accepted the fragile pixie.

"Hey Link!" called Navi, "I don't want to be left behind. Please don't make me stay."

Link knew how she felt. He wouldn't want to watch helplessly as his friends went to their possible doom either, but "I don't want to say that you'd be in the way Navi, but you might get hurt even worse and that's the last thing I want."

Navi reluctantly accepted what he said.

"We will do what we can to stop Ganon's forces before they can mobilize," said Link to the people. Then he motioned to his friends, "Let's go."

They headed back toward the temple door when Red Paw turned around and said, "Malon's your mother was a good woman and I see her in you."

Before she could answer, he was already inside.

Zelda had a feeling that they were in for a great deal of trouble, but she was glad that Link would always be there for her. She would be there for Link too and nothing would hold her back. She wouldn't be encased in some rosy crystal or trapped behind a wall of fire. She would fight along side her love with every last ounce of her energy.

When they reached the door to the Temple of Light, Link asked, "So how do we get inside?"

Zelda knew how, but she also knew that getting out would be the tricky part.

"We'll use the power of the Triforces," said Zelda, "Hold out your hand and concentrate on the door. We three must enter quickly to prevent any evil from escaping."

Zelda held out her right hand and a moment later Link held out his left hand. The Triforces of Wisdom and Courage lit up and the door slowly separated and like the Door of Time had. Link, Zelda, and Red Paw quickly entered and the door closed behind them.

Link looked around him. he was very surprised at what he saw. This wasn't the Temple of Light, they were still in Hyrule! They were in Hyrule Field. The door must have transported them there. Link could see the Koriki Forest behind them, and Death Mountain off to the side. Gerudo Valley was off to the side and before them, Link could see Lon Lon Plateau with its castle's castle?

There was a castle there! Link could see other changes too. There was no grass below his feet. Everything took on a dead look. The sun was a sullen gray, and the sky was brownish. Link saw no signs of Hyrule Castle Town which could usually be seen even at a distance. The cloud above Death Mountain looked like Death himself. Everything was warped and out of proportion."

"Where are we?" asked Link troubled.

"It's the Sacred Realm!" said Zelda, she seemed equally as bothered by what she saw, "Or should I say the Evil Realm?" she paused for a moment. After a moment, she continued, "It seems that Ganondorf as used the Triforce's power to change the sacred resting place of the Golden Power into his own 'Dark World'. If I were you, I wouldn't be surprised by anything I saw."

"I've seen my share of strange things since I met you two," said Red Paw, "Let us go on and finish this."

"Right," agreed Link.

Zelda only nodded.

They began to move toward the most out of place structure in sight, The castle on the darkened plateau. It was gray stone and built like a medieval castle. There was a tower on each of its four corners which each had a window on each face. Not one ray of light emanated from the any window. Link couldn't see anything within the castle, but he could tell that they were being watched. There was definitely a set of eyes focused on them, but Link could not tell where. The feeling was coming from everywhere around them.

They climbed the plateau and came to the castle's door.

"Shall we go in?" asked Red Paw.

Link shook his head, "No."

"But why?" asked Zelda.

"Who knows what traps Ganondorf has for us in there," Link explained, "Let's take a short cut." He removed the Maceshot from his item pouch. He aimed it upward at an overhang, "Hang on to me!" he called. Zelda grabbed Link around the shoulder and chest and Link scooped Red Paw up with his right hand. Link squeezed the handle of the Maceshot and released the mace. It hooked some stone and took hold. After testing the line, Link started the Maceshot retracting. They quickly reached the top and Link helped the others up.

The three made their way to the center of the roof. Then, suddenly Ganondorf's booming laugh came upon them.

"Well, well, well," he called. Link couldn't see him, but he knew that he must be close, "You don't want to miss all the fun. Hehe!" "I've prepared a special playmate for you all. Meet my latest creation. It is a being of formed chaos. I call him Vertigo!"

A huge creature appeared before them. It was like nothing that Link had ever seen. It was truly a nightmare. The creature was completely gray and dark. It had six heads; one on its shoulders, one on its chest, one in place of each hand and one for each foot. It had dark penetrating eyes and large wings. It had horns on its 'main' head. Vertigo must have been at least thirty times Link's size. All of its heads gave a near deafening roar.

Link took charge of the situation. "Zelda," he called, "It looks like

an undead creature. Try your life magic!"

"Right!" said Zelda.

Despite the size of their adversary, Red Paw leapt up on it and began to tear at it with his feet and tail. As he did this, Link began to slash at it with the Master Sword. It seemed though that Vertigo was immune to such physical attacks. The deranged monster began to swing its snakelike arms at them. They were forced to back off.

Zelda hit it with her magical attacks. Vertigo began to stomp its feet as it roared in pain. The ground suddenly began to upheaval as it stomped. Link and Zelda lost their footing and fell to the ground. Zelda's power didn't seem to do any damage though.

"I'm sorry," she said, "I'm just not strong enough."

Suddenly Link caught a glimpse of Vertigo directly in the eyes and his world began to spin. Link wasn't sure what was going on. He tried to get up, but couldn't tell if he was standing. He called out, "Don't look into his eyes!" but wasn't sure if he had said anything or if he had even heard his own voice. Everything was distorting before him. He felt nauseous and grabbed his head. He wasn't sure if he was on the ground or in the air. Then, a sharp pain struck his cheek. The spot it hit felt hot. Everything suddenly came back into focus again. He saw Zelda and realized that she had slapped him. That little jolt must have done the trick.

"Thanks," he said. He shook his head to get the last of the cobwebs out.

"Don't mention it," replied Zelda, "and thanks for the warning."

She had heard him. That was good; he wouldn't have to repeat himself. Link realized that they would have to work together on this one. Link's weapons and Red Paw's claws weren't enough, neither was Zelda's magic.

"Zelda," he called, "Let's pool our power!"

"What do you mean?"

Link removed Saria's ocarina from his pouch and handed Zelda the Ocarina of Time. "Cast Life on the ocarinas. If we combine our powers, we might have a chance," he thought of his friend who had given him the ocarina that he held now, "Saria will help too. I know she will. Let's do our part!"

Zelda cast her Life magic on the ocarinas, "I'm not sure what it will accomplish though."

"Just follow my lead and we'll call up a tempest. Play the Song of Storms."

Link dodged another swipe from Vertigo and then began to play. Zelda played the songs harmony and they played the tune that called a great mass of clouds together. Thunder sounded and lightning struck around them. Then raindrops, green raindrops, began to fall from the sky. It was quite refreshing to Link, but the life infused water proved to be devastating to Vertigo. The raindrops began to burn the creature's

skin, and its flesh began to liquefy. Its arms fell limp and it was quickly reduced to a puddle of gray goo.

Even as Vertigo was fading away, Ganondorf appeared before them. He laughed and then looked at them coldly. "At first I never imagined that a boy like you could give me such trouble!" he said, "It is unbelievable that you defeated my alter ego Agahnim the Dark Wizard. But I will never give you the Triforce! I will destroy you and make my wish to conquer Hyrule come completely true without delay!" He drew a powerful and frighteningly familiar looking sword from a sheath on his belt. "It seems that every thing in Hyrule has a Dark World equivalent. I call this the Boss Sword and it is the Sword of Virtue's Bane. Hahaha! En Guard!"

Ganondorf emitted a pulse of energy that knocked Zelda and Red Paw backwards. Link looked to them, then, drawing the Master Sword, he faced Ganondorf.

"You're gonna pay for that!" promised Link.

"Bring it on, kid."

Ganondorf advanced on Link. They began trading off clashes but seemed evenly matched. The Evil King did a diving strike and came down hard on Link's shield. The blow knocked him down on his knees, but he quickly stood and slashed his adversary across the chest.

He called out in pain and put his hand over his chest. When he removed it, Link saw blood on his fingers. Strangely enough he started laughing again.

They clashed swords again. Ganondorf showed no signs of weakening, but Link wasn't about to give up either. He thrust the Master Sword forward. But Ganondorf seemed ready for this. He sidestepped and dodged Link's attack. Then, to Link's surprise, Ganondorf thrust the Boss Sword forward. Link gritted his teeth as the sword tore through his chest. Pain shot through him. The Master Sword slipped from his fingers. He saw Ganondorf's sneering face—the blade sticking through him—he looked to Zelda; there was a look of horror on her face. He collapsed backward but never felt himself hit the ground.

Zelda watched in horror as Link's body crumpled like a rag doll. "No! Not now—it's too cruel," thought Zelda. Tears came streaming down her face. Then her sadness turned to rage against Ganondorf.

—

"You!" she screamed.

Ganondorf only laughed.

Zelda charged up and unleashed a salvo of magic attacks at Ganondorf but he shrugged them off and laughed. Ganondorf seemed to have become stronger since they had last seen him. He shrugged her attack off. "Oh Princess," he called laughing the whole time, "Passion negates wisdom. You of all people should know that. But now let us finish this. Once you are out of the way, I will have supreme control over the Triforce."

Ganondorf held out his hand and a red triangle appeared on his fist. His features began to distort and stretch. His complexion became darker and his eyes glowed like fire. Horns protruded from his head, and his face elongated. A long tail began to whip around behind him and a large sword appeared in each of his hands. Ganondorf had become Ganon.

"Ganon!" screamed Zelda.

Red Paw arched his back and growled.

But before anyone could do anything, Zelda noticed something odd. On Link's left hand, the Triforce of Courage had lit up bright blue.

Ganon saw this too, "What! Impossible!" he growled.

Link's body limply levitated from the ground and was enveloped by a blue glow until Zelda could see only his silhouette. Although she couldn't see Link himself, she could see his outline. His body began to stretch out as if he had just woken from a nap. His fingers began to elongate and rapier sharp claws formed around his fingers. A pair of wings unfolded. Link's head narrowed and his body enlarged. Bulging muscles flexed and a long spiked tail with a drill tip began to swat agitatedly.

Then, the light broke and a fierce yet somehow gentle looking beast was uncovered. Link (at least she hoped Link was under all that leathery skin) lowered slowly to the ground. He glared at Ganon and hissed.

Ganon gave a roar as 'Link' leapt in front of Zelda to block her from any of the Evil King's attacks.

Ganon charged at 'Link', "You!" he screamed, "You are the Beast of Courage? You have haunted my dreams for years now! It will be a pleasure to destroy you."

"Don't think so!" said Link, "I'mâ€|no, \_WE are going to put a stop to you once and for all!"\_

—

As Ganon charged Link, Link spun around and buried his spiked tail into the monster's side. Link began to slash at Ganon with his claws. At the same time, Zelda began a barrage of magic spells and Red Paw attacked Ganon in a hit and run stile to keep him off guard.

Ganon made a fist and took a swing Link's head, but the smaller and more agile Link caught his hand and stopped Ganon's advance dead. Zelda could hear the bones in Ganon's right hand (the one where the Triforce resided) crack and crunch, then he pulled sharply backward and tore Ganon's arm right off.

Ganon pulled back and squealed in pain. Red light began to pour out of the stub.

Link must have known something that she didn't, for he scooped her and Red Paw up and launched them over the side of the castle. He

glided with the two in his arms.

Zelda looked back to see Ganon fall and then explode in a fiery inferno. The ball of fire enveloped the entire castle but didn't stop there. It seemed that Ganon's entire dark world was collapsing. The sky was full of billowing smoke and the earth began to spew clouds of ash.

Link landed and returned to his original form. The three of them began to run toward the door and safety. They ran and ran and ran, but the destructive power behind them kept getting closer. Zelda felt as though her chest was going to explode she was so out of breath.

The door was in sight now. They were close now to safety. Zelda was sure that they were going to make it, but then, the last thing that Zelda thought would happen happened. Red Paw tripped and stumbled to the ground. Link and turned around to see if they could give the cat assistance.

"Go!" commanded Red Paw. He was unable to get up before the flames swallowed him up.

They did as they were told though. Zelda regretted leaving him, but by telling them not to attempt a rescue he may very well have saved their lives. They ran and passed through the door with the flames on their heels.

They were safe, but more importantly, "Link!" Zelda squealed with delight, "You're alive!" Although still exhausted, Zelda ran to him and threw her arms around him. He hugged her tightly.

"Zelda, I thought I'd never see you again, but then a light opened my eyes again. I saw and I knew what I had to do. It seems that the Triforce has the power to change its bearers" he stopped.

Zelda knew that he was looking at his hand for she noticed the same thing her Triforce part was responding to something. They turned to the still open door and saw something moving in the smoldering ruin that lay beyond it. There was a silhouette coming toward them. Link drew his sword and readied himself. After a moment a red glow could be seen through the mist.

It was it was Red Paw. In his mouth was the Triforce of Power. He entered the Temple of Time and laid it down. Red Paw's red fur had been singed gray, and the blades on his tail were broken, but he looked ok otherwise.

"Red Paw! You're ok!" called Link and Zelda at once.

They went to him. He seemed glad to see them as well.

"Told you I can take the heat," he said and smiled.

"The Triforce of Power," said Link, "So Ganondorf is finally gone for good?"

But just then the red triangle went dark and the door to the Evil Realm slammed shut. Ganondorf's laugh boomed over them as the door vanished and was replaced by the Pedestal of Time once more.



"It was a decoy?" questioned Red Paw.

"Now how are we supposed to defeat Ganon?" asked Zelda.

Link faced them and said simply, "Another time. Another heart."

**\*\*Epilogue:\*\***

**\*\***

**\*\* \*\***

**\*\***

The commemoration of Hyrule Castle:

It was finally finished! After months of hard work, the last of the last of the stone and mortar found its place. The castle was smaller than the old one, but it was just as beautiful.

Link admired the work they all had accomplished. However, with the King gone, Zelda would soon be crowned Hyrule's queen and her carefree days would end. The coronation was scheduled for within the week.

It was sunset and Link and Zelda were walking along the stream that went along the castle. They were holding hands and planning for the future when Link heard hoof beats in the distance. Zelda heard it too and they looked to see the source. A white steed was carrying a man coming towards them. His hair was white but he looked like a strong man, a leader.

As he got close, he dismounted and it was then that they realized who it was.

"Father?" questioned Zelda.

That's who it was in fact. He held out his arms and she ran to him. They embraced warmly.

"I've missed you so much my daughter!"

"Father, how?" she asked. Tears of joy were streaming down her cheeks.

"I took the advice that a young man gave me long ago," replied Harkinian. He was looking right at Link, "and stopped being so pigheaded."

Zelda hugged her father tightly. Link saw her mouth "Thank you" and knew it was for him.

A lost child finds a friend. Koriki Forest:

"I don't know why I came back here!" said the blue-skinned girl. The children of the forest pestered her so. She folded her arms and sat down on the soft, comfortable ground.

"This is your home," said Fado. She sat down next to Frost.

"Scat you little brat," called Frost.

"Oh all right," Fado got up and left.

Then a little fairy fluttered down from the treetops. The fairy fluttered about her head for a few moments and though Frost tried to shoo her away, the little flying thing seemed persistent.

"What do you want?" Frost snapped.

"My name is Dignity," said the fairy, "It looks like you're a lonely person so I thought I'd make your acquaintance."

"I don't need anyone!" said Frost.

"What ever," replied Dignity.

She began to flutter away, but Frost suddenly felt a warmth in her heart that hadn't been there for a long time. She called out, "Wait! Don't go! Um, are you anyone's guardian fairy by chance?"

Saria plays a song for Mido. Sacred Forest Meadow:

"That was beautiful," said Mido, "I know you used to play a lot of songs on your ocarina, but I never really listened. But you know that? When you became a sage and your music stopped, I really missed it."

"I'm glad you liked it," said Saria.

"I really missed you too."

"Really?"

"Yeah! I thought I'd never see you again. You see, you really mean a lot to me. I never came out and told you but I really like!"

A species reborn. Death Mountain:

Red Paw strode though his home. He had gotten his message across and the King had apologized sincerely for what had happened to his people.

Now Red Paw sat down, alone. But then, a light flashed and the sages named Impa and Saria stood before him.

"What is it you want?" he asked.

"It is not what we want," said Impa, "This is for you. I kept her under the pretenses that she was a pet. She told me of her cubs, but it was too late. I'm sorry."

"I told Impa about your loss," said Saria, "And not your suffering ends."

From behind the two strode a female Catrion. She looked familiar, only older! "Harmony?" cried Red Paw. They ran to each other and they nuzzled.

"Red Paw! I've missed you so much!"

Oh yeahâ€|

\*\*\_And the Master Sword and the Duotane Blade sleep once  
moreâ€|foreverâ€| â€|perhapsâ€|\_\*\*

\*\*\_

Date complete: July 18, 1999. 6:44 PM Eastern Standard  
Time.

\_\*\*\*\*\*\_\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\_\_\_\_\_\*\*\*\*\*\_ \_\*\*\*\*\*\_\_\_\_\_\*\*

\*\*\_\_\_\_\_\*\*\*\*\*\_ \_\*\*\*\*\*\_\_\_\_\_\*\*

End  
file.